



Representative Jeff Kaufmann February Electronic Newsletter, Part 2

Hello again:

This is my second February electronic newsletter and again there is a wide variety of issues researched by our staff. The cost of the health care initiative below is much bigger than expected. I am disappointed in the lack of affordability initiatives which I believe is as important as accessibility. If you have any questions or comments let me know.

See my weekly newspaper column for the “hot issues” that often emerge suddenly. My column also expresses my personal opinion more directly.

I am about halfway through my Listening Post schedule where I visit every community in my District during the legislative session. See my weekly column for the two-week schedule.

Like you I am anxiously awaiting spring.

Jeff Kaufman

Consultant: Cost of Health Care Initiative is \$550 million

On Tuesday, the cost of the health insurance mandate bill proposed by legislative Democrats became very clear to Iowans. And the impact is still reverberating throughout the Capitol.

John Shiels, a consultant with the Lewin Group, appeared before a joint meeting of the subcommittees considering the bill and made his initial presentation. In his talk, Shiels went over Lewin’s analysis and laid out what they believed would be covered by a state plan and what the cost would be to individuals and families in the plan.

It was only after the meeting that Shiels told the *Des Moines Register* the total cost of full implementation of the mandate would be \$550 million *annually*. The Lewin Group’s assumptions are based on the state providing coverage for 285,000 uninsured Iowans.

Shiels also stated that implementing the individual mandate would increase costs to the health care industry between 2.5 and 3 percent.

Lewin’s analysis found that the number of children without coverage between 45,000 and 54,000. Implementing a mandate for all children in Iowa to be covered would cost at least \$25 million. This is lower than initial thoughts from LSA and DHS that put the cost closer to \$40 million.

One part of the discussion that has not been broached yet is who would be the “givers” in this process. The Health Care Commission proposed a number of assessments on various aspects of health care to fund the mandated coverage for lower income Iowans. These have been left off the table to this point.

In a related note, the Boston Globe reported last Friday that the board overseeing the Massachusetts health plan is considering a 14% percent increase in premiums and dramatic hikes in co-pays for plan participants. The Massachusetts Connector Board said that these increases were needed since the program had more people sign up than expected.

The Board also reported that businesses in the Bay State were dropping coverage so that their employees could get the state’s plan, which is significantly cheaper for both employers and employees. This action, known as “crowd out” in the insurance world, was not anticipated by those who put the plan together the program. Because of these factors, the Connector’s staff now projects that the cost of their program will double in three years.

The Massachusetts plan is the blueprint for House Study Bill 636.

New Mercury Thermostat Ban Measure Okayed By Environmental Panel

On Monday, February 18, 2008, the House Environmental Protection Committee considered, amended and passed House File 751 by a unanimous 20-aye vote. HF 751 prohibits future sales and installation of mercury thermostats used to control room temperatures and requires discarded mercury added-thermostats to be handled as hazardous wastes. The goal of this legislation is to divert from Iowa landfills an estimated 450-pounds per year of mercury. In the last two decades, mercury-added thermostats have been replaced by electronic thermostats, many of which have multiple settings that reduce energy use. This legislation was brought to the General Assembly's attention by an Iowa Middle School (West Branch) which gave a presentation to legislators and government officials on the issue a year ago.

The bill specifies that beginning on April 1, 2009, a person who discards solid waste shall separate out mercury added thermostat out of solid waste and handle it as a hazardous waste or universal hazardous waste. The bill further provides that starting on July 1, 2009, it shall be illegal to offer for sale, sell or install a mercury added thermostat. The bill further provides that thermostat manufacturers that offered for sale mercury added devices shall develop and submit to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) a plan describing a collection program for mercury added thermostats by October 1, 2008. Such a plan must include:

- (1) an education and outreach program that targets wholesalers, retailers, contractors and homeowners who may handle mercury-added thermostats with the cost of this program being borne by the manufacturers;
- (2) that handling and recycling of the mercury-added thermostats is consistent with provisions of universal waste rules;
- (3) provide containers for mercury-added thermostat collection at a reasonable one-time fee per container;
- (4) provide for collection centers for homeowners, which may include regional collection centers, and (5) provide for a collection system to all collection centers, but such cost may not be accessed to collection centers.

The legislation requires mercury-added thermostat manufacturers to implement the collection system by April 1, 2009. In addition, the manufacturers must submit, beginning in calendar year 2010, an annual report to DNR concerning the number of mercury-added thermostats collected in the prior year, the amount of mercury involved, an accounting of cost involved and an evaluation of programs effectiveness. Also commencing on April 1, 2009, thermostat wholesalers must act as a collection site for mercury-added thermostats and must promote and utilize the collection system. The bill establishes an escalating goal of recycling at least 70% of discarded mercury-added thermostats within the first two years of the program and 80% after three years.

Why 911 Needs To Change

It's the stuff that science fiction movies are made of. Electronic Textiles that record health and environmental data of the wearer; chemical sensors in cell phones that warn about the presence of harmful chemicals, toxins, and viruses in the air; health stability chips that can be implanted under the skin to notify emergency responders when your health deviates from the norm; and nano-sensors implanted into paint that can monitor environmental conditions.

Although we aren't quite there yet, 911 experts say that we aren't far off from achieving and implementing that technology. And when we do, are we going to have an emergency response system that can handle it? Can it be integrated effectively with current emerging communication technologies like cell phone text messages, video and photo messages, and Voice over IP (VoIP)? Michael Ramsey and Mark Hixson of Ramsey Emergency Services, who gave a presentation to the Government Oversight Committee on the subject, stressed that fundamental and significant

change in the communications industry is driving the need for Public Safety solutions that will accommodate the many new ways that emergency services can be requested and the response provided.

Currently, Iowa is in the midst of what is called Phase II of Enhanced 911 (E911). After nearly 30 years of operating on 1960's technology for 911 services, E911 was developed to provide 911 services for the growing number of cell phone users in the country. Resources were set up to be able to deliver the call, and relevant information, to an appropriate Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). PSAPs field 911 calls. Around the year 2000, with the beginning of E911, Phase I began providing to PSAPs the phone number and general geographic location of the call. Phase II took that information one step further and began providing longitude and latitude coordinators for the caller, as well as call-back capability in the case of a disconnected call. Phase II is active in all 99 counties in Iowa.

But a move from E911 to Next Generation 911 (NG911) is now under way. The difference here being that NG911 can now accommodate for even further emerging technologies, while still providing for current Legacy systems still in use (radios, landline phones). NG911 can streamline existing methods of communication into a single, more efficient method.

NG911 relies on an Internet Protocol (IP) based infrastructure that would convert all incoming information to a signal that can be transported along fiber-optic communication channels, rather than the copper-based lines of traditional phones. In a world of emerging voice-less communication options, such as text messages, camera phones and video phones, there needed to be a way to allow this information to get to the PSAPs for proper emergency notification. When recent headlines read "Text Message Helps Rescue S.C. Teenager" (Associated Press) and "Would-Be Kidnapper Busted Thanks to Camera Phone" (Lemont Township, IL), it's a necessity and an expectation by the public that emergency services be able to handle these types of communication.

NG911 would also provide several other very important features. All communication traffic through current Legacy systems would be converted to IP signals that could be transferred where appropriate. This would allow separate systems to communicate with each other during cases of emergency. Linn County, the City of Marion, and the Cedar Rapids police are all on different networks currently. If a disaster were to happen to that region, there would be no interoperability between them. NG911 would provide that interoperability.

It would also provide redundancy in the communication system. If a link in the chain of communication were to fail in current systems, communication would shut down. During Hurricane Katrina, for example, the barrage of 911 calls coming in to emergency centers overwhelmed the lines of communication, causing a break in the chain. Within a few hours, 911 no longer existed for New Orleans residents. NG911 would prevent this from happening by having multiple ways for data to travel, thus providing back-up paths.

Finally, NG911 would provide a system in which emerging technologies can be accommodated and incorporated in the existing system as they enter the public. The next leap in technology isn't far off and the public will expect that the new method of communication around the corner would allow them to request emergency response wherever they are.

There is good news about migrating current 911 systems to NG911. First, NG911 network technology is available today and can be put into place and running in about 30 days. Second, NG911 projects may be cost justified within the existing budget for 911. Mr. Ramsey and Mr. Hixson of Ramsey are ready to pilot the changeover in a 7 county block in Southern Iowa soon. If you are interested in contacting Ramsey Emergency Services for more information, they can be reached at 319-668-9500.

County Salaries and Health Insurance

Did you know that Iowa's 99 counties employ nearly 17,000 individuals?

Did you know that the three highest paid supervisors live in Polk County (\$89,500), Linn County (\$84,500) and Story (\$60,000)?

Did you know that 18 counties pay 100 percent of family insurance coverage?

Effective government accountability starts with good information. The Iowa State Association of Counties (ISAC) recently posted their annual employee salary survey.

The document provides a county-by-county list of salaries for elected and non-elected officials. Insurance benefit information is also available.

Link here to view your county's information:

<http://www.iowacounties.org/Services/Research/FiscalInfo/Surveys/FY08%20Salary%20Survey/FY08RecentSalarySurvey.htm>

Committee Approves Anti-Smurfing Pseudoephedrine Bill

On Tuesday, February 12, the House Public Safety Committee approved HF 2265, electronic tracking of pseudoephedrine, also known as the anti-smurfing bill.

“Smurfing” is when a potential methamphetamine maker (or his designee) goes to multiple retail outlets and purchases the maximum amount of pseudoephedrine to use when manufacturing methamphetamine.

The bill provides for electronic tracking of purchases of pseudoephedrine by pharmacies. This will allow law enforcement to track down smurfers as they try to get around the law. *The bill is contingent upon sufficient funding being made available to pay for the new electronic monitoring system.*

The Committee adopted an amendment which was proposed by the retailers which it makes the bill more manageable for the pharmacies.

The bill requires the establishment of a real-time electronic tracking system to keep track of pseudoephedrine sales. However, the system is only required if sufficient funding is provided for by the Legislature at a later date. Also, the bill establishes a Pseudoephedrine Advisory Council to advise the board regarding the implementation and maintenance of the new electronic tracking system.

Finally, the bill moves the limit of 7500 milligrams of pseudoephedrine in the 30-day window into a new section of the Code and limits purchases to no more than 3600 milligrams in a 24-hour period. The penalty for violating this section is a serious misdemeanor.

The bill was approved on a 21-0 vote and now goes to the House Floor for debate.

Committee Approves Animal Fighting Bill

On Tuesday, February 19, the House Public Safety Committee approved HF 2005, a bill which increases the penalties for spectators of animal fights.

HF 2005 changes the Code regarding spectators of events where an animal is injured, tormented or killed for entertainment purposes. Current law prohibits a person from conducting, promoting or owning an establishment that holds animal fight. In addition, a person cannot transport, transfer, train or own an animal engaged in an animal fight. Any of these offenses is punishable by a class “D” felony. There is one exception to the law and that is spectators of animal fights are only guilty of an aggravated misdemeanor.

In part due to the media coverage of NFL quarterback Michael Vick and his involvement in dog fighting, animal rights activists and law enforcement officials pushed to change the punishment for spectators of animal fights. In addition,

when animal fights were discovered, suddenly everyone involved became spectators so they could avoid the harsher punishment.

The bill changes the law to make spectators of animal fights also guilty of a class “D” felony. It does not increase the punishment for those who conduct or promote the animal fights.

The bill was approved on an 18-3 vote and now goes to the House Floor for debate.

Membership on Boards and Commissions

Would you like to become a member of a state board or commission? Then you need to check out <http://openup.iowa.gov/boards/>

Boards and commissions are responsible for advising the Governor and Lt. Governor, the legislature and state agencies. The Governor and Lt. Governor are looking for qualified applicants who are strong believers in becoming an active voice in state government.

The current administration appoints members to more than 160 boards and commissions as openings become available. According to Iowa Code Section 69.16 all boards and commissions must be politically balanced. This means that if there are 5 members on the board no more than 3 of those members may be from a political party. The remaining two spots may be split between the remaining political party and those not affiliated with a political party. If a board has 8 members, 5 members may be from one political party the remaining 3 spots go to those in the other political party or those not affiliated. Iowa Code section 69.16A also requires the same gender balance as was described above.

If you are interested in becoming a member of a board or commission, please download the Gubernatorial Appointment Resume at <http://openup.iowa.gov/boards/bc-resume.pdf>. If you are interested, please look at what boards and commissions the Governor will make appointments to the boards list at the following link <http://openup.iowa.gov/boards/0803-bc-appointments.pdf> in March 2008.

After completing the form, please return it to the Office of the Governor for consideration by their consideration at Gubernatorial Appointments, Governor’s Office, State Capitol, Des Moines, IA 50319. The application may also be faxed to (515) 281-0217. If you have any questions please feel free to contact the staff dealing with gubernatorial appointments at 515-281-0215.

For a listing of all boards and commissions check out <http://openup.iowa.gov/boards/bc-list.pdf> The main website <http://openup.iowa.gov/boards/> also provides a searchable database for board and commission members by last name and by board.

General Dardis Addresses the Legislature

On Tuesday, February 19th, General Dardis addressed a joint session of the legislature. At that time he provided information regarding the status of the National Guard, thanked the Governor and Legislature for their support of the Iowa National Guard, talked about the stress on the National Guard, and then recognized individuals and a business for their dedication to the Guard.

Two of those individuals recognized were Dan and Mike Augustine of Augustine and Sons of Rose Hill, Iowa. Augustine and Sons a 150-year-old family farming business received the one of fifteen 2007 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award. The Freedom Award is the highest recognition given to employers for their support of their employees who also serve in the National Guard and Reserve. The Award recognizes U.S. employers that rise above the requirements of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act. Other award recipients include The State of Tennessee, General Motors, Turbocam, and Creative Healthcare solutions.

Augustine and Sons employ First Sergeant Matthew Strasser and assist his wife and two sons while he is on active duty. They have made the Strasser family a part of their own by maintaining the grounds at his home, involving his children in vacations and assisting with extracurricular activity attendance, as well as giving his spouse funds for a trip to visit First Sergeant Strasser overseas. Additionally, the Strasser family resides in a house owned by Augustine and Sons rent-free and First Sergeant Strasser receives his yearly bonus while away. Despite Augustine and Sons having only two employees, they have been generous and understanding for the time off First Sgt. Strasser needed to attend meetings and training in preparation for his tour and to spend quality time with his family while continuing his regular salary. Previously, Augustine and Sons has received the Patriot and Pro Patria Awards, and their integrity and dedication to their military employee First Sergeant Strasser is well deserving of the 2007 Freedom Award.

Committee Passes Bill to Fund the Veterans Trust Fund

At the Veteran's Affairs Tuesday meeting the committee passed HF 2158. HF 2158 would fund the Veterans Trust Fund at a Lottery estimated potential \$3.0 million per year using the proceeds from two additional scratch ticket games and two additional pull tab games.

The lottery says that these tickets will be have a veterans or patriotic theme and also plan on some tickets to include a 1-800 number directing veterans to a department where they can ask questions about services and benefits.

The current bill states that once the Veterans Trust Fund reaches \$50 million any additional revenue generated from the additional games will be dedicated to the Department of Veterans Affairs for purposes of the department.

As you may recall the Veterans Trust Fund's interest and earnings may only be spent to benefit veterans. The bill also retains the language which says that the fund must continue to have a minimum balance of \$5.0 million before the interest may be spent.

The bill is expected to come to the floor of the house with a new bill number.