THE HAHN REPORT

February 29, 2008 **Senator Jim Hahn**

Senate Democrats Vote to Take Away Iowan's Rights

Smokefree Air Act Passes in the Senate

Iowa's state motto is: "Our liberties we prize and our rights we will maintain." Iowa Senate Republicans have always valued this motto and followed it to the letter. The Smokefree Air Act has put a new spin on our motto: "Our liberties we waive our rights we forsake."

This week the Iowa Senate had heated debate on the issue of banning smoking in all public places in Iowa. The bill is designed to reduce Iowan's exposure to tobacco. Democrats claimed that it was clearly a health issue; the reality of the bill is that it is a reduction of Iowan's rights rather than one of educating them on the negative effects of tobacco use.

Businesses currently have the option to choose whether they do or do not allow smoking in their establishment thanks to a bill passed last year. Yet, with a nod to the "Kremlin State" the state government is now going to tell an individual how to operate their own lives. What is next? A ban on trans fats, caffeine, alcohol?

Iowa Senate Republicans truly believe business owners should have the right to decide what legal activities happen in their business. They should have the freedom to establish a smoking policy that best fits the needs of their businesses, their employees and their customers. The marketplace will ultimately decide whether a business should go smoke-free. A one-size-fits-all mandate from the government – even local government – is not the answer.

This is yet another case of government meddling in private business and taking away individual freedom. Our founding fathers established this country based on civil liberties, basic rights and the freedom of choice. A complete state ban of smoking in all public places should not be the government's decision.

"New Age" Way of Teaching One Step Closer to Reality

Democrats give three Rs a makeover

Iowa has had a strong history of local control in our education system that has served us well for over a century. That system is changing quickly as legislation was passed in the Iowa Senate this week that will have serious and long-term impacts on the delivery of education in Iowa.

The Model Core Curriculum bill is a measure to mandate a new and progressive style of teaching math, science, and literacy in both public and nonpublic classrooms in every grade and school in the state. Unfortunately, the mandate includes no regard for standards or accountability of any kind. It is simply a way of teaching Iowa students.

Senate Republicans proposed several amendments to the bill that would enhance Iowa's educational atmosphere including adopting rigorous education standards like those used in the state of

Massachusetts, where students rank #1 in the country for education. All of the amendments were voted down by the Democratic majority. Senate Republicans, however, believe that in order for our students to compete in a global economy, there must be a baseline of expectations in our educational system.

The bill requires teachers to use the Core-Plus method of teaching mathematics. A Mathematical Association of America study showed that students of the Core-Plus program enrolled in lower-level math courses at the university level and fewer students passed a higher-level math course while in college compared to students before them from the same high schools. The students' math grades were also below average in the lower-level math courses, compared to their peers.

The Model Core Curriculum has yet to be tested in any classroom. It is not fair for the legislature to ask any generation of children to act as guinea pigs for a new-age, radical method of teaching. Both sides of the aisle agree that Iowa's education system is flawed and urgently needs to be fixed. It remains to be see as to whether this method of teaching will prepare Iowa's youth to compete in a 21st Century world.

While quality education is one of the Senate Republicans' highest priorities, there is concern that the implementation of the proposed curriculum will have negative consequences on our children's achievement in the classroom, and could set Iowa back in terms of competitiveness amongst the highest performing states and nations.

Senate Republicans have continuously attempted to warn Democrats that many nationally-renowned educational experts believe the implementation of this new curriculum will have negative and "crippling" affects on our children's ability to learn. Unfortunately, this legislation, often referred to as "radical," appears to be on the fast-track and our high schools will begin noticing the affects of the bill by the beginning of the 2010 school year.

Coal Energy on the Horizon

Iowa re-examines energy options

Renewable energy and green jobs are currently the focus of much discussion. This week, the Governor unveiled an energy plan that would establish a renewable energy standard of 25% by 2025. As more details to this grand plan are revealed, it is important to keep in mind that renewable sources are not capable of supplying base load power like coal. It is the reason renewable energy sources provide only 5 percent of Iowa's electricity while coal provides more than 75 percent.

Iowa currently receives approximately 75% of its electricity through affordable, clean-burning coal. Any legislative action that restricts Iowa's ability to utilize this resource will not only hamper our ability to recruit businesses looking for reliable base load capacity, but will increase home energy costs for all Iowans.

Over the past 35 years, coal consumption in the U.S. has nearly tripled. At the same time, air quality has improved and emissions from coal-based electricity are 30 percent lower despite increased use. As technology advances, power plants are routinely retrofitted to capture more emissions, including the capture and safe storage of carbon dioxide. The days of dirty, black smoke polluting Iowa's air are over.

Coal provides a constant, reliable flow of base load power and its transmission capabilities can help further diversify Iowa's energy portfolio. There is a shortage of transmission lines in the renewable

sector across the country and it is a fact that construction of new coal-fueled plants and accompanying transmission lines lead to advances in wind power.

The cost of energy makes a huge difference in the quality of life for many Iowans. It is estimated that nearly 10 percent of households in this country are spending half their income to cover energy related expenditures. Regulations that diminish the use of coal in Iowa will likely result in increased reliance on natural gas at more than twice the cost. And like oil, America gets the majority of its natural gas from foreign sources.

Iowa's energy mix must be balanced and include renewable energy sources—but we also must realize that we need coal based electricity and cannot conduct our business or lives without it. Ultimately, technology-based solutions offer the greatest hope for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The U.S. and nations around the world can achieve meaningful reductions in GHG emissions and other pollutants by employing advanced clean coal technologies. Iowa and our nation should invest in clean coal research so in the near future, coal becomes an emission-free source of low cost energy found in our own back yard.

Last But Not Least - - -

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I would like to respond to the mail I have received concerning an article in my last Weekly Newsletter.

The legislation to which I was referring is SF 2216. It is most commonly referred to as the Model Core Curriculum. The bill would mandate to each school district, a very specific curriculum that they must teach their students, including but not limited to the very important subjects of math, science, and literacy.

As the details of this legislation continue to unfold, the amount of concern from nationally-recognized education experts also continues to grow. I am in favor of increasing rigor in our classrooms, but I am concerned that this legislation could actually have negative affects on our students' ability to learn. It appears that the Iowa proposal is modeled after a type of curriculum known as the Core-Plus. Core-Plus has not proven to produce the level of achievement in schools where it has been implemented.

In reference to my comments regarding nonpublic schools, I simply do not believe that we should subject private entities to a state mandate.

Once again, thank you for contacting me about this issue. I sincerely want to do what is best for all of our children and believe that we should set high standards for our students to achieve, but we should allow local districts to decide how to best teach in their own classrooms.

I am always interested in any of your questions that might arise.

SENATOR JIM HAHN
MUSCATINE, CEDAR &
JOHNSON COUNTIES