

THE HAHN REPORT

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Senator Jim Hahn

Lawmakers Face First “Funnel” Deadline of 2008 Session

Democrats move forward an anti-job, anti-growth agenda

The Senate was extremely busy with committee action this week as the Legislature faced its first self-imposed deadline of the 2008 session.

In order for a bill not to be declared dead at the end of the first “funnel” week, it must be approved by at least one committee in the Senate or House. The deadline, which comes roughly at the middle of the session, plays a key role in limiting the number of bills on the Legislature’s agenda. While the funnel does not apply to tax, appropriations or leadership bills, it does help eliminate hundreds of measures.

With Democrats in control of both the Senate and House this year, many Republican-sponsored initiatives did not survive the first funnel. Among them: a bill to help increase access to employer-provided insurance coverage for people who work in small businesses, legislation that dealt with a crackdown on illegal immigrants in Iowa receiving tuition and state money and a bill that would prohibit libraries from allowing children under the age of 17 to check out video materials that are R-rated.

Other measures that made it through funnel expand the size and scope of government while trampling on the rights of individuals. These measures include legislation that relinquishes local control when it comes to educating Iowa students, mandating who a business can serve and a repeal of an employer’s choice of medical provider in workers’ compensation claims.

While the Senate Democrats have failed to introduce a solution to the record-high levels of student loan debt in Iowa, Senate Republicans introduced a bill last year that would guarantee incoming freshmen at Iowa’s public universities would never see a tuition increase while attending school. Senate Democrats unfortunately refused to bring the bill up for debate before the end of this funnel week, hence permanently killing the much-needed measure.

The next benchmark of the legislative session is the second “funnel,” another self-imposed deadline that requires bills to be approved by the chamber where they originated as well as a committee in the opposite chamber.

As Iowa Senate Republicans continue to work for Iowan’s civil liberties, future generation’s education and not raising taxes; it is clear that Senate Democrats do not have those interests in mind as they make backroom, backward and backwoods legislation that have long-term negative effects on Iowan’s lives.

Senate Republicans Meet With Governor

Economic stimulus pkg. for Iowa still not any closer to reality

This week, Iowa Senate Republican leadership met with Governor Chet Culver in an attempt to bring an economic stimulus package to life for Iowans. Senate Republicans have remained firm in their stance on offering an expanded tax free holiday in August that would lift the restriction on purchasing only school supplies to include purchases for home or personal items.

Senate Republicans have also advocated for an expanded unemployment training program that would take one percent of the withholding taxes paid by businesses each year over the next five years for education purposes. The third prong in the plan would exempt any improvements made to an Iowan's home over the next 5 years from taxation for as long as they own the home.

In the meeting, the Governor would not commit to any of the Senate Republican's ideas. Instead, Governor Culver said he would like to wait and try to convince the federal government of a better plan for Iowans. As the President of the United States of America has already signed off on an economic stimulus package, there doesn't seem to be any room for bargaining at this point.

As gasoline prices and gallons of milk continue to rise, the time to help hardworking Iowa families is now. By expanding the sales tax holiday, a family of four that receives a check for \$1800 from the federal government will increase their buying power by six percent. This is equal to an extra \$108 in their pocket to spend on new clothes, a new computer or school supplies.

In addition, it is well documented that over the next five years Iowa is expected to see a skilled workforce training deficit of 150,000 workers. In the Senate Republican's economic stimulus plan, the diverted one percent of money of withholding taxes would go to a pool of money to be accessed by businesses that need to train and retrain their workers in order to compete in a 21st century global economy. Senate Republicans will continue to focus on creating jobs for Iowans through continuing education.

Iowa Senate Republicans will continue to work with Democrats to provide economic relief but by prolonging the financial pinch the Democratic leadership is helping no one.

Coal Energy Still Viable in Iowa

State examines two new power plants

As rolling blackouts are seen throughout the country and power grids go down due to over-consumption, Iowans are faced with more options than ever when it comes to providing a solid, stable source of energy.

As state leaders gear up to talk about new coal plants being built in Marshalltown and Waterloo, Iowans are poised to be in a great position nationally when it comes to reliable power. Because coal power is more efficient than ever, Iowans will not experience what happened in Texas last week: Most of the state's power had to be cut for about three hours due to cold weather and a large dip in wind power production – their main source of energy.

Nearly 80 percent of the electricity used in Iowa is produced by American coal. The state has among the lowest energy costs in the nation, due in large part to the state's reliance on coal. Access to low-cost electricity from coal is a huge economic driver in Iowa. According to a peer-reviewed study

from Penn State University, electricity from coal contributes more than \$21 billion to the state's economy, including nearly \$7 billion in household income.

Many claims are made about power plant emissions and health concerns. These same claims can be made against cars, industrial boilers, agriculture emissions, pollen, dust etc. The fact is there are many things in this environment that affect the quality of the air we breathe.

Air quality is better than it has been in a generation and one reason is cleaner coal-based power plants. Great strides have been made by the clean coal electricity industry over the past 35 years to reduce emissions and make coal generation as clean and efficient as possible. In fact, today's coal fleet is 70 percent cleaner than it was in 1970 thanks to the more than \$50 billion that has been invested in clean coal technologies. Very few industries have that kind of track record.

Keeping energy costs affordable by using low-cost options like coal helps promote a healthier lifestyle for Iowa residents. The less money Iowa families spend on electricity, the more money they have to spend on health care, improved housing and nutrition and many other factors to improve health and longevity. Those findings are supported by a growing body of research conducted by groups like the World Health Association (WHO), the United Nations, and leading academic institutions.

The bottom line is Iowa Senate Republicans want stable, reliable, cost-effective solutions when it comes to energy sources in the state and we continue to work to that end.

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