

## **House File 2645**

### **Collective Bargaining or Power Grab**

We in Muscatine, as with the rest of the State, are watching in amazement while the current political party in control in Des Moines walks over the other, along with Iowa citizens statewide. As usually happens when one political party gets control of all three branches of government, abuse occurs in large doses.

House File 2645, which centers on collective bargaining and more union control, smacks you right in your face of partisan politics. This is very easy to prove, simply go to the Iowa Board of Campaign Ethics and view our Political Legislators filed disclosure reports of contributions. Like a recent movie slogan, "Follow the Money"! It is easy to see who hundreds of thousands of dollars are going to, and who from. But who is creating this situation, and why, is only part of the story, the consequences are much more concerning.

House File 2645 did not get a full airing by either political party in Des Moines. The party in majority pushed it through the House with very little discussion. No Community leaders were heard from, no School Administrators, no City Council Members, no County Board Members and minimal debate of any kind. The Iowa House pushed the bill through in the middle of the night allowing no discussion, even to the point of forcible removal of school board members under the guise of inadequate credentials, when it was really about not allowing dissent or differing opinion.

Why the urgency and secrecy? The way this bill is written and presented to the Governor for signing allows the possibility of:

- Taking the decisions out of the hands of our elected officials and into the hands of union negotiators.
- May force the closing of some rural schools.
- Dramatically raise property taxes.

As you can see, if union negotiators are in charge of determining school class sizes, number of required teachers, who should be a school, city, or county acceptable health care provider, all bargaining by elected officials is lost. What this means, is the union can choose whatever topic they wish to discuss, nothing is sacred, but that is where so called fairness ends. From that point forward an arbitrator will determine the final decision if the union so desires, and our elected officials have no say whatsoever. Remember, in

## **House File 2645**

### **Collective Bargaining or Power Grab**

binding arbitration, school boards, cities, and counties, cannot win fiscal issues regardless of their financial ability to pay, because they can levy and raise taxes. We the people, elect our officials to govern and represent our best interests, if House File 2645 is signed by Governor Culver, we the people will have lost those rights so dear to us. Our daily lives will now be controlled by politicians and the unions that paid for them! “Follow the Money”!

Now, let’s talk about this in context of a bigger picture. For those of you who have been following State Government for the last few years, you may have noticed a few interesting things. We collect more revenue each year, but spend more than we collect each year. We have even spent as much as 3-5 times inflation. In fact, the Iowa Legislature is spending so much, so fast; revenue may not keep up even now with record collections. The House Democrats have even suggested we may have to bond debt to balance the budget soon.

This brings us to how our Legislature is functioning and changes needed. Every level of government has specific responsibilities that must take precedence such as roads, police, fire, garbage control etc., depending on the level of government of course, over any amenities or new social programs. These basic needs should be fully or at minimum adequately funded first, with other items divided between wants and needs along with available funds. For example, a State Constitutional Amendment for additional DNR funding has been suggested. This is a want, but not a current necessity when weighted against highway and bridge maintenance which has an approximate \$200 million yearly shortfall. Here you have a want verses a need, along with a practical priority as well as specific responsibility. In similar fashion, government is constantly trying to initiate new programs while underfunding current obligations such as Veterans Affairs, which we are now going to try and fund through gambling “Scratch Cards and Pull Tabs”. This approach is totally irrational because it is not enough money, and its existence is determined by economic conditions and the whim of gaming people which is very unstable. And likewise, our Iowa Senior Living Trust will be broke, why, no funding. Another example of a practical priority existing obligation inadequately funded due to lack of common sense and fiduciary responsibility. We have stood by and watched this Legislature spend more money than they collect, bleed every penny they can from local governments through disallowing of revenue streams and relocation of fees,

## **House File 2645**

### **Collective Bargaining or Power Grab**

and now pushing HF 2645 through to the Governor that will effectively marginalize all lower forms of government. It's beginning to look very similar to Socialism.

Iowa Government is out of control and proving to its citizens one more time that a balanced State General Assembly is a must. Our current majority party simply is mishandling power and putting a tremendous burden on its people. Iowa voters must elect a two party state government again, and mandate to them implementation of a "Common Sense Business Type Approach" to State Government before Iowa becomes forever crippled!

As Governor Culver stated on March 24<sup>th</sup> concerning House File 2645, he encouraged all sides to apply the "Iowa Common Sense Way". He further stated he may veto this bill in fairness to the process, and Iowa's people. I urge him to do so. And I urge you, the voter, to let him know your position on this vital issue. Muscatine and District 80's fate is in your hands!

Respectfully,

Robert E. Howard  
Councilman At Large  
Muscatine, Ia.