

THE HAHN REPORT

April 3, 2008

Senator Jim Hahn

Democrats Have it Their Way

Union boss power grab most sweeping change in the country

As the fallout from the rush to change Iowa's 34 year old law on collective bargaining continues Iowans are seeing the bill for what it is; political payback to the unions. The only hope that the taxpayers of Iowa have is for the Governor to veto this power grab by Des Moines special interest groups.

According to a nonprofit group based in Pennsylvania HF 2645, would give the public employee union bosses in Iowa more power than anywhere else in the country. This end run by the Democratic majority to pay off campaign debts has now placed the taxpayer in jeopardy.

While the Democrat spin machine is telling Iowans this is just like many surrounding states the other half of the story is needed. Yes, 27 other states have what is called "open scope negotiations", what is failed to be stated is that no other state has binding arbitration with no recourse to the judicial system.

What can arbitration with no judicial recourse bring to our schools and communities?

School board decisions, overturned by adjudicators, are regularly upheld by the courts. For example, the Iowa Supreme Court ruled in favor of the school board in Sheldon Community School District v. Lundblad despite its loss at the adjudicator level. The case involved a Sheldon teacher who berated and humiliated students. In response to a student who had written a paper on teen suicide, the teacher had suggested the student "try it" for extra credit. The teacher was repeatedly instructed to improve his behavior and was ordered to take classes to do so. When the behavior didn't improve, the board terminated the teacher.

In Board of Directors of the Fairfield Community School District v. Justmann, the board terminated a teacher's contract for engaging in a sexual relationship with a student. The board lost that decision at the adjudicator level but eventually won at the Iowa Supreme Court.

Under the bill passed by the Democratic majority these two teachers would still be employed damaging the lives of their students.

The taxpayers of Iowa will also feel the devastating effects of this legislation. Of the 25 states with the highest per capita property taxes, 19 of them have open scope negotiations. This equates to 76% of the 25 highest property tax states removed power from their local elected officials to give an unelected bureaucrat power over taxes. Iowans already pay more than they should in property taxes and this additional burden is courtesy of the tax and spend liberals in Des Moines.

Senate Republicans are still hopeful that Governor Culver will listen to Iowans and veto this bill to protect our students and your pocket.

Open Meetings Changes Moving in the Senate

Senate Democrats block efforts to open up the Senate to sunshine

If you have an opportunity to visit our beautiful state capitol I hope that you will look inside the Senate chamber and have a look around. The artwork and stately scenery is truly something that

every Iowan should experience. When you do have that chance you will also notice some very large, dark and heavy curtains that grace the windows of the Senate. These curtains, unfortunately, were shut tight on the citizens of Iowa by the Democratic majority in the Senate.

The Senate Appropriations Committee continued the session long debate over Iowa's open meetings law this week. Iowans expect their governments and leaders to throw back the curtains of darkness to ensure a fair and balanced debate. The days of smoke filled rooms filled with special interest groups should be a relic of the past along with spittoons on the floor of the Iowa Senate.

During debate in Committee, Senate Republicans offered numerous amendments that would open up the legislative process. All of these amendments were voted down by the majority party with the sponsor of the legislation even stating that "too much sunshine could cause cancer". Why is the majority party afraid of opening the curtains?

The first amendment by Senate Republicans would have allowed the taxpayers of this state to attend meetings between local elected officials and union bosses. The Democrat rewrite of Iowa's collective bargaining law has now set the table for higher taxes for everyone. This dramatic change of Iowa's collective bargaining laws stripped the citizens' rights of representation at the bargaining table. By allowing the citizens to attend these meetings the taxpayers of Iowa will have an opportunity to voice their concerns.

The remainder of the amendments offered by Senate Republicans focused attention on the glaring exemption from the law, the Iowa Legislature. Currently, the legislature is exempted from the open meetings and open record laws that were written nearly two decades ago.

Public officials should always strive to set an example for the rest of Iowans. The legislature, for the good of all Iowans, should be pressing for more openness from our government bodies. Yet, why is the legislature telling local governments that do as I say not as I do?

The next step for the bill is the floor of the Iowa Senate. While the timing of the debate is not yet known Senate Republicans will continue to fight for an open government.

Energy Commission Keeps Iowa on Cutting Edge

Ideas generated benefit Iowans

Energy issues remain on the forefront of legislation in the Iowa Senate. A good start to kicking off this new age of energy is a commission, whose sole purpose is providing information to the Iowa Legislature as well as overseeing the many uses and benefits of this expanding resource. The Senate passed legislation that establishes a 12 member commission on energy standards designed to help develop ideas to increase energy efficiencies. More importantly, the bill requires a reporting mechanism and may provide ideas that the Iowa Legislature can implement such as energy incentives.

Iowa Senate Republicans are hopeful that this is the dawn of a new era for Iowa when it comes to energy and powering the state. This is a starting point for Iowans to play an active role in deciding how the various types of energy are regulated, mandated and funded. It is truly the power of the people as ideas are generated and given back to the government.

As we have seen Iowa's exports double in the last 5 years we know that many Iowa industries rely on a stable power source. If we want to continue to maintain a strong business climate and encourage industry to move here, we need to keep energy in mind and go one step further to include alternative energy sources. We must make it easy and beneficial for all energy sources to be utilized.

Providing incentives to utility companies and smaller producers through tax credits is one way to boost production and provide more options for Iowans. Thanks to efforts such as these, Iowa now has seven wind turbine manufacturers either located or locating in Iowa. Iowa is truly adopting the attitude of "if you build it, they will come." We need to keep this momentum up as new businesses move to Iowa and continue to grow. This commission will bring grassroots ideas and accountability to an industry that Iowa is embracing and promoting whole-heartedly.

SENATOR JIM HAHN
MUSCATINE, CEDAR &
JOHNSON COUNTIES