

# THE HAHN REPORT

April 11, 2008

Senator Jim Hahn

## **The Beginning of the End**

*The Legislature has begun the push to the end*

This week was the start of what Capitol “Insiders” call the shutdown of the legislative session. While we are pushing towards adjournment, the Democrats, in their zeal, to get out of session have passed many flawed policies. Day after day, bills that take away Iowan’s rights, bills that are bad for the Iowa economy and bad for job creation continue to pass, thanks to the Democrat Majority.

Last week the Senate Appropriations Committee debated a bill about opening the curtains of government rays of sunshine. Unfortunately this week the Majority party has conducted meetings behind closed doors while cutting deals to influence votes on the Senate floor. This blatant and flagrant abuse of power strikes at the heart of the democratic process rendering the discussion and debate of ideas on the floor a moot point.

This week, the Legislature saw the passage of a smoking ban in Iowa. The highly contentious issue came out of Conference Committee and passed in the Iowa House of Representatives as well as the Senate. Changes were made to the original legislation and the bill will now exempt Iowa’s casinos yet will ban smoking in every privately owned restaurant and bar in Iowa. While there is no doubt about the negative health effects of tobacco smoke we have allowed the government to pick winners and losers. Those in the Golden Dome this week told Iowans that we will protect lobbyist laden casinos but not the local business owner.

Also passed this week, tucked into a health care bill, was an additional 15 bureaucrats that will cost the taxpayer \$1.2 million. A Republican amendment to deliver that money towards health care coverage of Iowa’s children was voted down by the Democrat Majority. While the amendment failed, the bill passed and Iowa’s government will continue to grow. Bureaucrats won and the children that need health care access lost thanks to a majority party that refuses to listen.

One has to wonder how this legislative session will end. Iowans can only hope that the self-serving style politics of these tax and spend liberals stop. Our rights are being taken away while the tax burden increases even with Iowans paying over \$3 a gallon at the pump.

Senate Republicans remain hopeful that common sense will win out but we are not holding our breath.

## **Iowa’s Economy Continues to Grow**

*National recession has yet to effect Iowa*

The Revenue Estimating Conference (REC) held their first meeting of 2008 last week to review the economic outlook for Fiscal Year 2009 and adjust the Fiscal Year 2008 projection. They announced a larger than expected revenue increase to the tune of \$78.8 million for FY 2008 and \$49.1 million for FY 2009 compared to their December estimate.

This is no doubt good news that Iowa's economy has remained so resilient despite the gloomy national financial picture. The dark cloud from this bit of good news is the desire of the majority party to spend this money on additional government bureaucracy. Senate Republicans believe the safety of our roads and bridges trumps additional bureaucracy.

After a rough winter, Iowa roads are in great need of repair and many counties are running on financial fumes. This additional revenue should be dedicated to repairing Iowa's infrastructure. Iowans count on functional, safe and strong roads to carry them to work, school and play.

State government has three main purposes; provide for safe communities, educate the next generation and provide a strong infrastructure. We have begun to abdicate these responsibilities for the flashy news conferences touting the latest pork barrel, lobbyist influenced, spending priority. Our democratic system is intrinsically tied to a market based economy that is dependent on those purposes.

Senate Republicans were the first to propose a plan early in session that would take a portion of Iowa's gambling revenue to fund infrastructure improvements. The plan was summarily rejected by the Democrat led Senate without due consideration. We are ready to address this issue; when will the Democrats be prepared?

The Senate Democrats continue to be vague about their spending priorities and have yet to release their entire budget. This continued attempt to govern under a cloak of darkness must end to ensure an open and honest debate. Without all of the information the priorities of the majority party will not be known until the final bill at the final hour. This last train out of Dodge will serve the Des Moines special interest groups not the people of Iowa.

## **Collective Bargaining Still Up in the Air**

*Democrats continue to use stall tactics*

Senate Republicans this week utilized a parliamentary procedure, to no avail, to end the Democratic Majority's stall tactics on the Collective Bargaining bill. Senate Minority Leader Ron Wieck asked Senate Majority Leader Mike Gronstal why he has yet to send the bill to Governor Chet Culver's desk or taken the bill up for reconsideration.

Apparently the Majority Party is content to keep their constituents in limbo. Much of this legislative session has been conducted behind closed doors, with self-serving motives, and a wait and see attitude thanks to the Democrat Majority. Democrats had ample opportunity to go home and meet with constituents expressing a desire to make changes to this bill and they still did nothing. Their silence on this issue is deafening.

A motion to reconsider under Senate Rule 24 was officially called for on the Senate floor this week. Having a resolution to the issue is something Senate Republicans are working towards before the end of the session. The Majority Party responded to the motion with a delay tactic, calling into question the Republican's motive to re-examine the issue. Senator Gronstal is quoted as saying: "Understanding that, at this point, I appreciate the fact you're curious and as far as I'm concerned you can stay curious."

Democrats continue to show their true colors as time progresses yet the fact remains that Governor Culver has threatened to veto the bill.

If signed by the Governor the taxpayers of Iowa will 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.

SENATOR JIM HAHN  
MUSCATINE, CEDAR &  
JOHNSON COUNTIES