

STATE ISSUES FROM SANDS

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News from the Hill...

I have received several questions asking how the 20% increase in the budget over this fiscal year and the budget this compares to the increases in general fund spending over the previous 16 years. Looking at the history of general fund appropriations, the majority party is spending the same amount in two years as Governor Branstad, Governor Vilsack and Legislative Republicans spent in the previous 10 years. The State's spending is out of control.

Odor...

[HF 2652](#) proposed creating the legal framework for applied livestock odor research to be conducted by a combined effort involving Iowa State University, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). As rural Iowa becomes more urbanized, the odor study becomes more important. Unfortunately, the Iowa legislature did not think this was a priority and did not pass [HF 2652](#) or the funding bill.

Absentee Ballots...

With the passage of [SF 2089](#), an absentee ballot request no longer needs to be submitted on the absentee ballot form. In 2004, the legislature passed a bill requiring absentee ballot applications only to be accepted if they were on the proper form. With the change in the law, an individual can submit an absentee ballot request in any form as long as it includes all of the information required and is written on a piece of paper 3x5 inches or larger. Personally, I believe that all absentee ballot requests should be on a standard application form, but this majority decided otherwise.

Road Infrastructure Funding...

Iowa was once known for having some of the best roads in the nation. This certainly is not the case today. One of the most important functions of the state legislature is the building and maintaining of the state's infrastructure. The roads in Iowa are in the worst condition I have seen in my lifetime. County roads, city streets and state highways all need some repair. Incomplete four lanes, like highway 61, 20, 30 and 34, to name a few, are all waiting funding. The study conducted known as TIME-21 indicates the need for an additional \$200 million appropriated into the road infrastructure fund annually. Bureaucrats seem to believe spending more money is the solution to all problems. This year the State of Iowa will spend \$1.1 billion on road funding, \$6.5 billion in the general fund, and around \$15 billion overall. It seems as if we could find an extra \$200 million in a \$15 billion budget to better fund our roads. It is very unfortunate this problem has not been addressed and we are in the last three weeks of session.

Military Home Ownership...

[SF 2354](#) re-codifies the Homeownership Assistance for Military Service Member Program in the Iowa Finance Authority (IFA) chapter of the Iowa Code, and it strikes the legislation from the Veterans Affairs Commission chapter of the Iowa Code. Although this places some additional limitations in process, it expands persons eligible for the program.

The Iowa Legislature created the Military Service Member Homeownership Assistance Program in 2005 to help eligible members of the armed forces purchase qualified homes in Iowa through matching grants. A grant under the Program is a dollar-for-dollar match of the service member's contribution up to \$5,000. The Program is administered by the Iowa Finance Authority.

For more information about the program call IFA at 1800-423-7230, send an email to military.grant@iowa.gov

For more information on these and other bills: <http://www.legis.state.ia.us>

Until next time,
Tom Sands

Committee Assignments

Environmental Protection

Ways and Means

Commerce -**Ranking Member**

Public Safety