

# IOWA HOUSE REPUBLICANS

March 2, 2023

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## Appropriations

### Minnesota Gives Preview of What May be in Store for Iowa

With Iowa's three-member revenue forecasting panel preparing for the annual spring meeting next Friday, interested parties may have gotten a preview of their assessment on Monday when the state of Minnesota released its latest revenue and economic forecast.

As with other Midwestern states, the Land of 10,000 Lakes is projecting continued revenue growth over the next two years at a much slower pace than the current budget. For the next biennial budget which starts on July 1, Minnesota's state budget director is forecasting revenue growth of 0.5 percent. That state is expecting to take in \$58.3 billion in state taxes in fiscal years 2024 and 2025, which is almost \$300 million more than in the current budget cycle.

The slower growth is driven by the continued belief in St. Paul that a national recession will occur. The forecast expects that recession to start later in 2023, but have a lesser impact than what had been expected last fall. They also expect a quicker recovery from the impending recession.

In terms of the last recession, the Minnesota forecast makes an interesting point. During the Pandemic recession of 2020, Minnesota lost 417,600 jobs in March and April 2020. Through December 2022, Minnesota had regained 377,000 of those positions. So that state has yet to recover to its pre-Pandemic employment level.

Iowa's next forecast will be set on March 10, as the Revenue Estimating Conference updates its predictions for Fiscal Year 2023 and 2024.

(Contact: Brad Trow 1-3471)

## Agriculture

### House Agriculture Committee Approves Five Bills

On Tuesday, February 28, 2023, the Iowa House Agriculture Committee passed five bills (House Study Bill 139, HSB 155, HSB 157, House File 388 and HF 389).

HSB 139 updates the state Veterinary Practice Code for the first time in over 25 years. Much of the legislation is codifying regulations which the Iowa Veterinary Board has adopted to deal with the evolution of the profession during the last three decades but for which the Code only had generalized authority. The new Code language will recognize and specify the scope of veterinary services that veterinary students, veterinary technicians and auxiliary veterinary personnel can perform and their relation to supervisory veterinarians.

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HSB 157 clarifies the legal authority for biogas collector lines systems to use aspects of public roadway right-of-ways to move biogas from an anaerobic digester system to a processing facility for the production of a renewable natural gas. Current law allows a public utility to construct, operate and maintain a public utility facility within a public roadway right-of way so long as it does not interfere with the road's use.

HSB 155 establishes a dairy processing and milk production innovation and revitalization fund administered by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS). The fund is created in the state treasury under the control of IDALS and consists of any money appropriated by the General Assembly and any other moneys available to IDALS or obtained or accepted for placement into the fund. The legislation directs IDALS to establish and administer the program for purposes of awarding financial assistance to eligible businesses engaged in projects that do any of the following—

- (a) expand or refurbish existing milk or build a new milk plant;
- (b) expand or refurbish existing mobile dairy processing units; or
- (c) rent building, refrigeration facilities, freezer capacity including mobile dairy or refrigeration units used exclusively for dairy processing; and
- (d) facilitate development of methods and technology that reduce farm labor associated with dairying including but not limited to robotic milkers, feeding and manure handling systems.

The bill further directs IDALS to promulgate rules to implement the program and establish criteria for participation.

The business must:

- (a) be located in the state,
- (b) not have been subject to any regulatory enforcement within five prior years,
- (c) employ only employee legally authorized to work in the state,
- (d) not currently in bankruptcy, and
- (e) employ less than 50 individuals.

House File 388 creates the offenses of 'intrusion' and 'surveillance' in regards to unauthorized operation of remotely piloted aircrafts (RPA) flying over a homestead or that part of a secured farmstead area where agricultural animals are kept. The bill was largely opposed by Democrats.

The bill specifies that using an RPA to knowingly fly over and within 400-feet of a homestead or secured farmstead owners' property and under 400-feet above the surface without consent is an 'intrusion. The first offense is a simple misdemeanor and the intrusion offense can escalate to a serious misdemeanor with subsequent violations or with a prior surveillance offense. The second aspect of the legislation specifies that 'surveillance' occurs when an RPA, equipped with a surveillance device, knowingly flies over and within 400-feet of a homestead or secured farmstead owners' property and under 400-feet above the surface without consent. The first surveillance offense is a serious misdemeanor and can escalate to an aggravated misdemeanor with subsequent violations or with a prior intrusion offense.

The measure specifies exceptions to intrusion or surveillance are of the following:

- a person acts with the consent of the owner of a homestead or farmstead,
- an RPA is operated any of the following: by a public utility, by various levels of government (federal, state, local, or interstate compact or agreement), is operated above 400 feet above the surface of the earth in that location, or for the exclusive purpose of collecting information regarding weather or climate conditions.

HF 389 creates an Agricultural Education Grant program within the Department of Education (DE). The measure defines "agriculture education program" as instructional programs provided by school districts to students enrolled in grades 9 through 12 in the agriculture, food, and natural resources portion of the career and technical education instruction HF 389 authorizes school districts to apply to DE for grants under the program to offset the personal services costs associated with employing teachers to provide instruction in an agriculture education program. The legislation establishes an agriculture education grant program fund in the state treasury and directs DE to adopt rules to

administer the program and develop a statewide system to track the time teacher devote to instruction enabled by these grants.

*(Contact: Lew Olson 1-3096)*

## Commerce

### House Provides Reasonable Updates to Iowa's Youth Employment Laws

This week, the House Commerce committee passed reasonable updates to Iowa's youth employment laws. This bill was developed with Iowa Workforce Development along with businesses, including grocery stores and restaurants, which hire many individuals under 18. Many of the changes adopted in committee also came from suggestions from labor unions and the Iowa State Bar Association.

This bill strikes a balance to ensure parental consent and safety, while also enabling young Iowans to build independence, work ethic and life skills as they begin down the path to figuring out their future. Iowa does have many workforce challenges, and this bill allows for youth to work in areas that are reasonable for them to work.

House Study Bill 134 makes the following changes for work activities for those under 18 years of age:

- Adds work activities for 14-year-olds, including using a microwave, loading and unloading vehicles, using kitchen cleaning products, and laundering.
- Adds minimal work activities for 15-year-olds
- Extends the timeframe for persons under 16 to work to 9 p.m. or 11 p.m. depending on the time of year
- Makes changes to the work prohibitions for 16 and 17-year-olds (Section 9), by adding performance of light assembly work not near machines, allowing driving a vehicle, office work and loading balers.
- Makes changes to work-based learning programs (Section 10)
- Allows the labor commissioner to waive or reduce a civil penalty based on the evidence, and may allow for a 15-day grace period before imposing a civil penalty. (Section 16)
- Clarifies liability of students in work-based learning programs driving to and from work (amendment)
- Allows a retail alcohol licensee to employ a 16 or 17-year-old to sell and serve alcoholic beverages for on-site consumption if the licensee has on file written permission from the parent (Section 19)
- Allows a minor licensee to drive their vehicle between 5am and 10pm, during work hours, over the most direct and accessible route between the minor's residence, school, and employment, as long as it is below 50 miles (Sections 20-22)

*(Contact: Natalie Ginty 5-2063)*

## Economic Growth

### Knoxville Raceway Rebate Extension Rounds the First Lap

This week House File 198 was unanimously approved by a House subcommittee. The legislation deals with a sales tax rebate for the Knoxville raceway facility—home of Sprint Car Nationals.

The raceway has had a sales tax rebate on the books for several years that is set to expire in 2025. That provision allows the raceway to file for a rebate with the Iowa Department of Revenue for the sales tax collected at the facility for goods and services sold. That money is then reinvested in the facility for infrastructure projects like ADA compliance and bathroom upgrades. Due to pandemic closures, the raceway missed out on a great deal of revenue.

House File 198 extends the amount of time the raceway will be able to file for a rebate from June 30, 2025 to June 30, 2030. The total amount of rebate that the raceway can receive is \$1.8 million. House File 198 is now eligible for consideration by the full Ways and Means Committee.

(Contact: Kristi Kiou, 2-5290)

## Education

### House Bill Tackles Explosion of Ideologically Driven DEI Positions and Requirements

Iowa's public universities excel when they are focused on their mission to promote the search for truth and knowledge while maintaining academic freedom and integrity, without being transformed into factories of ideological conformity.

House Study Bill 218 is first step towards dismantling divisive diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) bureaucracies which operate as ideological enforcement divisions on university campuses. Taxpayer funded political activists are housed within university bureaucracies under the DEI umbrella. In reality, they are internal squads working to persuade, teach and enforce ideological conformity.

Employees and students are bombarded with a constant stream of ideological emails, trainings, and programming. Students are required to take a certain amount of credits in DEI to graduate. DEI teams intentionally move away from traditional values such as colorblindness, equality and merit.

According to a 2021 Heritage Foundation Report call *Diversity University: DEI Bloat in the Academy*, the University of Iowa employs 59 people in DEI while Iowa State University employs 47. The report did not include a number for UNI. Iowa's 59 employees ranked as the 13<sup>th</sup> highest number in the country at the time. These positions are not mandated by law. These positions are optional.

The intent of this legislation is easily understood if one imagines what the reaction would be if the opposite was happening. What if the University of Iowa, Iowa State University and the University of Northern Iowa all built internal bureaucracies funded with taxpayer dollars to teach conservative political values, enforce conservative political litmus tests for hiring and publicly shamed students and faculty who violate conservative principles?

The fundamental question to ask is do Iowans support administratively enforced political coercion at their universities?

(Contact: Jeff Mitchell, 1-5137)

### Definition of Age-Appropriate Material in Schools is Tightened

Last month the House Oversight Committee held two separate hearings on the issue of age-appropriate material in school libraries and classrooms. On Feb. 6, parents cited the graphic sexual images, explicit sexual content and disturbing accounts of violent sexual assault, rape and pedophilia as not age appropriate.

The parents read aloud the graphic content while the graphic images were shown to the committee on a monitor. They argued their right to protect their children from age inappropriate material is bypassed through cumbersome and one-sided book reconsideration policies and committees which always determine the material the parents have questioned is, in fact, age appropriate. It is worth noting the television stations and radio stations are prohibited from showing the images or broadcasting the parents' testimony because it would have violated broadcast standards.

On Feb. 20, school board presidents, superintendents and executive director of the Iowa School Board Association appeared. They defended the use of the material in schools under the exception in the obscenity law which provides for educational or literary value in the overall context of the material.

House Study Bill 219 tightens the definition of what is age-appropriate by making it clear that material which contains graphic images and descriptions of sex acts or sexual activity is not age-appropriate. The bill was approved by the House Education Committee on Wednesday and is now eligible for debate in the House.

*(Contact: Jeff Mitchell, 1-5137)*

## **Teacher Empowerment Act Designed to Protect Teachers From Classroom Violence Advances**

On Wednesday House Republicans approved a bill aimed at empowering teachers to retake control of their classrooms. House Republicans have heard from many teachers across the state about the struggles they face in the classroom regarding behavioral issues in students, a lack of support from administrators, and trainings that take time away from their basic teaching responsibilities. House Study Bill 206 was put together to help address those problems. The bill is just the start of giving classroom control and personal safeguards to teachers. The bill is not in its final form and changes should be expected before any debate in the House. But the conversation will continue as funnel week ends. The bill includes:

- The ability of the state ombudsman to investigate complaints received by licensed practitioners related to violence in the classroom.
- The district must provide the legal authority (Iowa Code section or rules adopted by the State Board or the BOEE) that requires the employee to participate in the professional development programs.
- The district must provide notice of teacher immunity in regards to coming in physical contact with at student.
- Teacher must notify the parent/guardian within 24 hours if they witness student injury.
- Teacher whistleblower protection.
- Lays out a 3 strike system for student discipline. First offense, meet with school counselor and one day of in-school suspension. Second offense, meet with school counselor and 5 days of in-school suspension. Third offense, expel student from that class and if in high school, not receive credit for that class.

Again, this bill came from teachers coming to House Republicans and asking for help. Stay tuned as the bill moves through the process.

*(Contact: Kristin Rozeboom 1-3015)*

## **Another Step forward for ESAs**

The state of Iowa has selected Odyssey to administer its new Students First education savings accounts (ESAs).

Governor Reynolds signed the Students First Act into law on January 24, 2023. The program will provide K-12 students who attend accredited private (nonpublic) schools in Iowa with educational funding equal to “per pupil” funds allocated annually to Iowa’s public schools. It goes into effect for the 2023-2024 school year.

The state issued a request for proposal (RFP) on January 26, 2023, and selected Odyssey through a competitive solicitation process that generated four applicants.

Odyssey was chosen based on its ability to manage all aspects of program administration, including applications, financial transactions, compliance, fraud prevention, and customer service. Odyssey currently manages ESA programs in two states.

The state of Iowa will now begin the contract negotiation process with Odyssey. Once a contract is finalized, a team including staff from the Office of the Governor, Department of Education, Department of Management, and Office of the Chief Information Officer, will work with Odyssey to implement the application process and technology platform.

Details about the application process, including when it will begin and how families will verify school enrollment and/or income eligibility, will be provided in the coming weeks.

In the meantime, families interested in the Students First ESA program can find [information](#) about eligibility and answers to frequently asked questions on the Iowa Department of Education website. The webpage is updated regularly, and families are encouraged to sign up to receive notifications when new information is posted.

*(Info from Iowa Department of Education)*

*(Contact: Kristin Rozeboom 1-3015)*

## Environmental Protection

### EPA: Iowa Will Receive \$28.5-million in Grants

On Friday, February 24, 2023, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a press release that announced another tranche of over \$2.4 billion from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law for states, Tribes, and territories through this year's Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF). Iowa will receive a total of almost \$28.5-million with \$285,000 for 604(b) grants, and \$28,210,000 in additional capitalization grants. The funding will support communities in upgrading essential water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure that protects public health and treasured water bodies across the nation.

*(Contact: Lew Olson 1-3096)*

## Health and Human Services

### House Advances Many Health Care Bills

The House Health and Human Services Committee passed 28 bills that survived the first funnel, the first legislative deadline of the session. Below are some of the important bills that advanced to expand access to health care and child care throughout the state.

- **Medical Malpractice** – House File 161 has been signed by the Governor. This bill limits the total amount of noneconomic damages for a medical malpractice claim at \$2 million for causes of action involving a hospital, and at \$1 million for all other causes of action. This bill does maintain an existing limit in law for noneconomic damages at \$250,000 when there has not been a substantial or permanent loss or impairment of a bodily function, substantial disfigurement, loss of pregnancy or death. Iowa joins 28 states that have limited noneconomic or total damages, and this bill will help recruit and retain physicians to Iowa.
- **Mental Health Noncompetes** – House File 93 prohibits non-compete agreements with mental health providers, insuring Iowans can continue to see their mental health providers.
- **Psychologist Prescribing** – House File 183 removes the requirement that a psychologist complete certain requirements within 5 years of being issued a conditional prescription certificate, removing a barrier to additional mental health prescribers in Iowa.
- **Rural Emergency Hospitals** – Senate File 75 establishes licensure for Rural Emergency Hospitals as established by federal law. These health care facilities maintain a 24-hour emergency room, but do not include acute inpatient care.

- Maternal Health – House File 427 comes from the Governor to address access to maternal health care in Iowa. The bill does the following:
  - Doubling the number of Regional Centers of Excellence Programs in Iowa
  - Adding four annual family medicine obstetric fellowships every year
  - Creates a statewide standing order to allow pharmacists to dispense initially 3-months of an oral hormonal contraceptive, hormonal vaginal ring, or a hormonal contraceptive patch, and then subsequent year supplies, to patients 18 years and older. The woman must complete a self-screening risk assessment and blood pressure check prior to being dispensed the contraceptive.
  - Adds \$1.5 million to the More Options for Maternal Support Program and allows for funds to be used to support fatherhood initiatives.
  - Increases the allowable expense for nonrecurring legal fees from \$500 to \$1000 per child for reasonable, necessary costs directly related to the legal adoption of a child eligible for Iowa’s adoption subsidy program.
  - Expands opportunities for foster care students under the All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship Program
- Child Care Physicals – House File 319 strikes the requirement that all personnel in a registered child care provider must have a physical prior to beginning employment.

Child Care Assistance for Child Care Workers – House File 343 sets up a two-year pilot program allowing children of persons employed full-time at a child care facility to be eligible for state child care assistance.

*(Contact: Natalie Ginty 5-2063)*

## Judiciary

### House Judiciary- Protecting Children

In light of the House Oversight Committee meeting on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, the House Judiciary Chair submitted House Study Bill 214 to prohibit the use of hormone therapy and puberty blockers while also ending irreversible genital surgeries on children (minors under age 18) in our state.

Even in politically progressive Europe, several countries are hitting the brakes on medicalizing gender incongruence in children. Sweden, Finland and the United Kingdom are no longer allowing so-called gender affirming care on minors. Ireland and Italy are moving in that direction.

Puberty blockers do have FDA approved uses for children facing puberty at too young of an age. However, doctors are now prescribing the puberty blockers off label to stop children from developing at a normal rate and allowing their bodies to stay prepubescent for an undetermined amount of time so they can decide if they want gender altering medicines or surgery. Long term side effects of using puberty blockers can include weight gain, hot flashes, headaches, fertility issues, weaker bones and other growth and development problems. These drugs also impact breast growth, periods, facial hair growth, and other bodily features.

Along with puberty blockers, other drugs are being prescribed to boys and girls that will cause them to have significant physical and physiological changes. HSB 214 also bans these hormone therapies from being given to children in order to alter their looks and bodies. Multiple medical facilities in Iowa are currently providing boys with the female hormone estrogen. This causes boys to take on characteristics of a girl including breasts, smaller testicles, thinning facial hair, and mood changes including anxiety and depression. Girls are also being prescribed testosterone to make them look more like boys. The risks of either estrogen for boys or testosterone for girls can include; irreversible infertility, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, risk of stroke, and other life endangering condition. Hormone therapies are sometimes considered partially reversable drugs for individuals who identify as transgender, but they are still high risk, especially for kids.

The University of Iowa LGBTQ+ clinic has performed a small number of mastectomies on minor girls to change the look of their body and not for other medical reasons. While no place in Iowa is currently conducting bottom surgery for children who believe they are transgendered, this type of surgery will also be banned for those under 18.

It is important to remember this bill does not stop the use of puberty blockers, hormone therapy, or surgery for children with medical conditions.

*(Contact: Amanda Wille, 1-5230)*

## Labor

### House Labor Committee Passes Paid Leave for State Workers

On Tuesday, House Republicans passed HSB 201. This bill is a portion of the Governor's larger initiative on supporting parents and families before, during, and after birth.

This bill states that a state employee that is entitled to leave under FMLA shall be provided paid leave for the birth or adoption of a child if the leave is taken within 12 months following the birth or adoption.

In the bill, the birth parent is allowed up to four weeks of paid leave and the parent who did not give birth is allowed up to one week of leave. For the placement of the adoption of a child, a state employee parent is entitled to up to four weeks of paid leave.

This bill supports parents as they care for the newest additions to their families.

*(Contact: Kristin Rozeboom 1-3015)*

## Oversight

### Data and Evidence Do Not Support the Safety of Gender Transition Procedures on Minors

On Thursday February 23<sup>rd</sup> the House Oversight Committee questioned Dr. Katie Imborek, Professor of Family Medicine and Co-Director of the University of Iowa LGBTQ+ Clinic and Dr. Dave Williams, Chief Medical Officer for UnityPoint Health on the issue of transgender surgeries, procedures and treatments for patients under the age of 18 performed at their institutions.

Rep. Brooke Boden, chair of the committee, also inquired with Mercy One and Broadlawns but neither organization performs these surgeries, procedures or treatments on minors.

University of Iowa LGBTQ+ Clinic performs mastectomies for female minors wishing to transition to male. The clinic's services also include cross-sex hormone therapy and puberty blockers for children. It is important to note that this is all done with parental consent. The clinic does not perform genital surgeries on minors.

UnityPoint Health does not perform any transgender surgeries on minors. It does provide hormone therapy and puberty blockers to minors with parental consent.

Questions from Republican members of the committee focused on several themes.

First, providing gender transition to minors violates the first duty of medicine: do no harm. Cross-sex hormones have long-term irreversible effects such as infertility, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and a risk of strokes. Puberty blockers are described as completely reversible yet they come with the risk of sterilization, osteoporosis and decreased growth spurts. Surgical procedures are irreversible. If a minor female has her breasts removed and then realizes it was a mistake, she cannot have her breasts reattached.

Second, while parental consent is obtained, is it truly informed consent? Minors are not old enough to get a tattoo, buy cigarettes, or drink alcohol. The prefrontal cortex – the part of the brain responsible for rational decision-making – may not be fully developed until age 25! As a society, we have already decided that minors are not mature enough to make life-altering decisions, yet some want to affirm and support decisions of teens who want to remove healthy body parts.

Third, the data and evidence simply do not support the safety of gender transition services. The British Medical Journal (<https://www.bmj.com/content/380/bmj.p382>) ran an article last week which contained the following:

*Sweden’s National Board of Health and Welfare, which sets guidelines for care, determined last year that the risks of puberty blockers and treatment with hormones “currently outweigh the possible benefits” for minors. Finland’s Council for Choices in Health Care, a monitoring agency for the country’s public health services, issued similar guidelines, calling for psychosocial support as the first line treatment*

*Medical societies in France, Australia, and New Zealand have also leant away from early medicalisation. And NHS England, which is in the midst of an independent review of gender identity services, recently said that there was “scarce and inconclusive evidence to support clinical decision making” for minors with gender dysphoria and that for most who present before puberty it will be a “transient phase,” requiring clinicians to focus on psychological support and to be “mindful” even of the risks of social transition*

*Sweden conducted systematic reviews in 2015 and 2022 and found the evidence on hormonal treatment in adolescents “insufficient and inconclusive.” Its new guidelines note the importance of factoring the possibility that young people will detransition, in which case “gender confirming treatment thus may lead to a deteriorating of health and quality of life (i.e., harm).”*

*In 2022 the state of Florida’s Agency for Health Care Administration commissioned an overview of systematic reviews looking at outcomes “important to patients” with gender dysphoria, including mental health, quality of life, and complications. Two health research methodologists at McMaster University carried out the work, analysing systematic reviews and concluding that “there is great uncertainty about the effects of puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, and surgeries in young people.” The body of evidence, they said, was “not sufficient” to support treatment decisions.*

According to the American College of Pediatricians, studies show that 80-95 percent of children who experience gender dysphoria will accept their biological sex by late adolescence.

Due to the lack of conclusive evidence and the unacceptably high risk of doing harm, House Study Bill (HSB) 214 will prohibit these kinds of medical interventions in Iowa.

(Contact: Jeff Mitchell, 1-5137)

## Public Safety

### Public Safety Committee Works to Beat the Funnel Deadline

The public safety committee has advanced numerous bills to help Iowans. Here are a few more significant bills that have survived the funnel:

### House File 119- Assault of a Pregnant Woman

The bill increases the penalties for assaulting a woman if the attacker knows or reasonably should know the woman is pregnant. Current law does not have higher penalties for attacking a pregnant woman.

### House File 178- Vehicle Identification

House File 178 requires a person who has a restraining order against them, to provide vehicle information including make, model, color and license plate to the courts so that information can be shared with the victim. This includes all registered vehicles in the offender's residence. The bill will help victims to identify their offender and avoid interaction or report additional harassment.

### House File 406- Human Trafficking- Penalties

HF 406 increases penalties for a person convicted of human trafficking. Penalties are also enhanced for a person involved with trafficking a child under 18. The bill strikes the ability of offenders to receive a deferred judgement or a deferred or suspended sentence.

### House Study Bill 173- Firearms

This bill makes several changes to Iowa's firearms laws.

- Allows employees to keep a firearm in their locked vehicle, out of sight, while at work and prevents an employer from enacting a policy to prohibit it.
- Allows a person, who possess a permit to carry, to have a firearm in their vehicle when on school property while dropping off or picking up a student.
- Persons at Regents Universities may keep firearms in their locked vehicle.
- An insurance company cannot refuse to insure a school simply because they allow authorized persons to carry weapons in the school.
- Strikes the ban on firearms in casinos. Casinos will now be able to make their own policy regarding firearms.
- Additional changes and cleanup regarding carrying firearms.

*(Contact: Amanda Wille, 1-5230)*

## **State Government**

### **State Government Advances Midwives Bill**

This week the State Government Committee reported a bill to create the licensure of midwifery as a licensed health-related profession. The bill received bipartisan support and if enacted, the bill would expand access for women in Iowa to maternal care options and provide expanded options for how and where a birth takes place.

Iowa, along with the rest of the country has seen rising maternal mortality rates and declining access to obstetric services the last 20 years. [House File 265](#) will provide expanded options for individuals who want to become licensed in midwifery and mothers who wish to receive maternal care from a midwife.

The bill creates the Board of Midwifery which would consist of seven members, four members who are professional midwives eligible for licensure, one member who is a licensed OB-GYN and experienced professionally consulting with midwives, one member would be a nurse midwife, and a member representing the general public who is not a licensed midwife or health care provider who has received midwifery services. This newly formed licensure board would adopt administrative rules to establish the rules and requirements for licensure. Additionally, the board would define professional and unprofessional conduct, permit licensees to obtain the appropriate and relevant screening and testing for midwife clients, and permit the administration of midwife specific medicine for child birth.

In addition to the creation of the midwife licenses and the licensure board, the bill would waive liability for healthcare providers accepting a transfer client from a midwife from any outcomes arising from the actions of the midwife. Frequently mothers have been turned away from health care providers because they received care from a midwife. This bill would provide more sunlight into the use of midwifery and providing liability protection for hospitals who take on patients who experienced unexpected difficulties while under the care of the midwife.

Additionally, the bill would prohibit health and accident insurance providers from denying coverage of services provided by licensed midwives or from charging a higher copayment, deductible, or coinsurance than similar benefits of the plan.

With more maternity wards closing across Iowa and increases in maternal mortality rates it is crucial that the legislature look for alternatives to expand both availability to maternal care and variety in options. Passing House File 265 is a step in that direction. The bill will move to the House floor for further consideration.

*(Contact: Jason Covey 1-3626)*

## Transportation

### Busy Funnel Week For House Transportation Committee

Bikes in cross-walks, patriotic license plates, DOT Commission membership, and how big of a load can a semi carry on Iowa's interstates – that's just a sample of the issues faced by the House Transportation Committee in its final meeting before the first funnel deadline.

The Committee took up eleven pieces of legislation on Wednesday, moving a number of major issues to the House floor. Among the bills are:

**Giving cyclists the right of way in cross-walks** – Currently, motorists only have to yield to pedestrians in designated crosswalks. House File 214 would extend this to cyclists to help reduce car-bike accidents.

**Recognizing Volunteer Fire Fighters, EMS personnel, and Reserve Peace Officers** – Many Iowans volunteer their time and energy to serve their communities in these important roles. House File 418 tries to recognize their sacrifice by allowing the three categories of volunteers to purchase a set of tires annually using the state's master contract.

**Internet Sales of Motor Vehicles** – A proposal to allow a national internet car dealership to operate in Iowa brought in-state car dealers and the DOT to the realization that Iowa's laws on car sales may not be in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Committee moved House Study Bill 168 out of committee with the understanding more work has to be done on how Iowa treats the advertising and dealing of cars in the internet age.

**Regional Representation on the State Transportation Commission** – Iowa law says the seven member Transportation Commission can not have more than four members of the same political party. But it says nothing about regional representation. House File 231 would divide the state into seven regions and require the Commission to have one member from each area.

**Four-lane Highway 30** – This bill would urge the Transportation Commission to make another of Iowa's main east-west highways four lanes across the state. With 160 miles to go on Highway 30, House File 230 calls on the Commission to make that road four lanes from the Missouri to the Mississippi River.

**Flying Our Colors and Protecting River Communities** – In the 2020 session, the Legislature created a new license plate celebrating the state's colors. Some of the revenue generated from these plates was directed to helping the Flood Mitigation Board respond to flooding events. But the additional funds were to end on June 30, 2023. House File 417 continues the funding transfer to the Flood Mitigation Fund.

**Weight Limits on Goods Being Transported on Interstate Highways** - Federal law sets how much weight semi-trucks can carry on interstate highways. One would think a federal law would mean a uniform standard across the country. Wrong! Federal law contains a number of exceptions for states or different products. Iowa's seven-axle weight limit on interstates is 80,000 pounds, while the limit on primary roads established by the DOT is 96,000 pounds. House Study Bill 212 calls on Congress to allow Iowa to raise the interstate highway weight limit to 96,000 pounds.

*(Contact: Brad Trow 1-3471)*

## Veterans Affairs

### Expanding Access to Hunting for Disabled Veterans

This week, the House Veterans Affairs committee passed House Study Bill 205 to provide veterans injured in military service certain discounts on hunting licenses and allow the use of a crossbow while hunting with a tag during archery season.

The bill creates a fund within the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs to be used for grants to purchase archery season deer hunting licenses and tags for eligible veterans. Those veterans can use a crossbow during the archery season.

By adding a definition of "permanent disability" as a person that was injured due to their military service, it expands the veterans eligible to purchase a hunting or fur harvester license without paying the wildlife habitat fee, and those eligible for a free annual fishing or a combined hunting license if they meet certain income limits.

*(Contact: Natalie Ginty 5-2063)*

## Ways & Means

### All Systems Are a Go—Energy Grant Program Taking Applications

Recently the Iowa Energy Center (IEC) Board and the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) announced the opening of applications for the fifth round of the IEC Grant Program. The grant program is designed to facilitate energy-related economic development in Iowa. Applications for this round of funding will be open until March 23, 2023.

The program is funded by gas and electric utilities across Iowa and is open to Iowa businesses, colleges, universities, and private/nonprofit agencies and foundations that bring forward projects that provide a benefit to Iowa's residential and commercial customers. The eligible projects and initiatives must also align with one of the areas of focus shared by the Iowa Energy Plan: technology-based research and development, energy workforce development, support for rural and underserved areas, biomass conversion, natural gas expansion in underserved areas, electric grid modernization, alternative fuel vehicles, and carbon management.

Grant awards will range from \$10,000 to \$1,000,000, however, most grants awarded will be in the \$150,000-\$300,000 range. For more details about the program, including the policies and procedures handbook and pre-application guide, visit [iowaeda.com/iowa-energy-office/grants](http://iowaeda.com/iowa-energy-office/grants).

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