

Appropriations

Backfilling TIF Continues to Grow

As the Legislature has debated the amount of increase in state aid to schools, questions have again arisen about how much the state is paying to cover lost school property tax revenue due to a variety of local tax incentives. These incentives divert or eliminate property tax revenue normally dedicated to financing local schools. While some contend the use of these incentives have little impact on financing of local schools or governments, the amount of money being replaced by the General Fund is a significant financial commitment by the state.

The Tax Increment Financing program was established in 1992 as a method to help local communities finance community improvement projects. Under TIF, when a municipality (city or county) decides to set up a TIF project - known as an urban renewal area - the property tax from parcels within the project do not go to the levying authorities (school district, county, city, etc) but instead are used to pay for the improvements made to the urban renewal area. A school board or county board of supervisors that is not originating the TIF district does not have a vote to approve the use of their property tax revenue for this project. Schools are held harmless by the state, which replaces the lost property tax revenue through the school finance formula.

The cost to the state of backfilling the schools' lost property taxes is something not easily found, as there is no budget line item for it. The funds needed to backfill the lost revenue are taken out of the General Fund before any action is taken on the budget. It is not accounted for in a manner like normal spending or even tax credits.

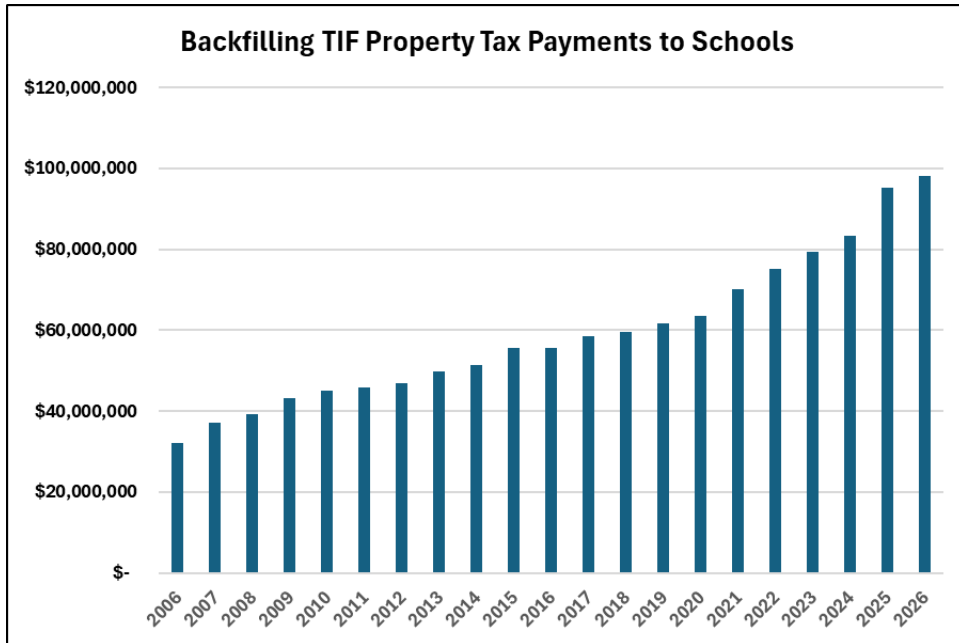
Why is this the case?

When TIF was created by the Legislature, the law was written to have the diverted uniform school levy (aka the \$5.40 levy) payment to be replaced by state funding and thus there would be no financial loss to the schools. This process is part of the school finance formula, with the annual TIF backfill cost built into the annual calculation and thus no separate appropriation is required.

When TIF started in 1992, it had a relatively small impact on the state budget of \$5.2 million in backfill payments. But as the use of TIF has proliferated across the state, the hidden impact on the budget has grown significantly. This chart utilizing data from the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Agency shows the growth of these backfill payments since Fiscal Year 2005:

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In Fiscal Year 2026, the state is backfilling \$98.0 million of school property tax payments diverted into TIF districts. Of that amount, the Legislative Services Agency (LSA) has calculated that \$65 million of that amount comes from the twelve most populous counties.

The backfilling of TIF is just one of the ways the state is covering property tax revenue not collected by schools. Property tax revenue not collected on properties granted a property tax abatement is also covered by the state. And for the first time next fiscal year, the state will cover the additional property tax revenue that school districts could collect for being on the budget guarantee.

Another piece picked up by the state is the Property Tax Replacement Program or PTRP. Since 2012, the state has paid the portion of supplemental state aid increases that before had been funded with increasing property tax levies. Like the TIF backfill, PTRP also started small but has grown significantly. In Fiscal Year 2026, PTRP will provide \$137.3 million in what would have been property tax payments to schools. And in Fiscal Year 2027, that figure will rise to \$146 million now that SSA has been set at 2 percent.

When all these various programs are combined, the state will be expected to cover over \$300 million of school funding that would have been paid by property taxpayers in Fiscal Year 2027.

(Contact: Brad Trow 1-3471)

Commerce

Nuclear Energy Taskforce Holds First Meeting

This week, the Nuclear Energy Taskforce held its first meeting. This group was required by [Executive Order 17](#) to make recommendations by July on the development and advancement of nuclear energy technologies and infrastructure in the state.

Dr. Mark Nutt, the Director of Nuclear Energy Programs at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory is the chair of the taskforce. Dr. Nutt is a graduate of Iowa State University’s Nuclear Engineering program. The taskforce

membership includes utilities, NextEra Energy, a county supervisor, Iowa State University, the Iowa Utilities Commission and members of the legislature.

Meeting information, minutes, and public comments can be found on this website:
<https://opportunityiowa.gov/about/boards/nuclear-energy-task-force>.

As many Iowans know, NextEra Energy is in the process of restarting the Duane Arnold Nuclear Power Plan by the end of 2029. This 600-MW, single unit power plan near Cedar Rapids closed in 2020. NextEra expects to spend \$50 million to \$100 million this year to recommission Duane Arnold, according to FERC. NextEra presented that there would be a \$9.1 billion economic impact across Iowa during construction and operations, 1,640 jobs throughout construction, 393 direct jobs during operations and \$1 million annually to Linn County in Generation Tax.

(Contact: Natalie Ginty 5-2063)

Economic Growth

Iowa Economic Development Hands Out First BIG Awards

Last week the IEDA Board approved the state's first BIG awards for five companies, which will assist in the creation of 536 jobs and result in \$268.2 million in new capital investment for the state. These projects are located in Bettendorf, Bondurant, Hiawatha, Vinton and Waverly. Business Incentives for Growth (BIG) program supports capital investment and quality job creation projects that strengthen Iowa's economic competitiveness via tax benefits.

Arconic Corp.—Bettendorf

Headquartered in Pittsburgh, Arconic Corp. produces aluminum products for commercial aircraft, space vehicles, defense systems, and automotive markets. The company will build a new aluminum casting complex at its Davenport Works facility in Riverdale/Bettendorf, increasing its capacity to process and recycle aluminum into ingots used to make sheet and plate products. The \$131 million capital investment is expected to create 40 jobs incented at a qualifying wage of \$28.46 per hour. The board awarded \$6.55 million in tax credits through the BIG program.

Vermeer Corp.—Bondurant

Vermeer Corp., based in Pella, is a family-owned manufacturer of agricultural and industrial equipment serving customers in more than 100 countries. To meet growing demand, the company will develop a 300,000-square-foot production facility in Bondurant, including 12,000 square feet of office space, parking, and shipping and receiving areas. The \$102.7 million capital investment is expected to create 182 jobs, including 62 incented at a qualifying wage of \$35.11 per hour. The board awarded \$5.1 million in tax credits through the BIG program.

CCB Packaging—Hiawatha

CCB Packaging in Hiawatha provides packaging services for food and pharmaceutical companies. The company will build a 65,000-square-foot addition and install a new automated production line to modernize and expand its operations. The \$13.3 million capital investment is expected to create nine jobs, including six incented at a qualifying wage of \$30.41 per hour. The board awarded \$343,497 in tax credits through the BIG program.

Sewer Equipment Company of America—Vinton

Sewer Equipment Company of America manufactures sewer cleaning and vacuum equipment for municipal and contractor markets. The company will purchase an existing facility in Vinton to bring all fabrication operations to Iowa, with components shipped to its Illinois plant for final assembly and testing. The \$3 million capital investment is expected to create 30 jobs, of which 22 are incented at a qualifying wage of \$24.18. The board awarded \$84,375 in tax credits through the BIG program.

Revolution Concrete Mixers—Waverly

LMI US, LLC, doing business as Revolution Concrete Mixers, is headquartered in Minnesota and manufactures rear-discharge concrete mixers with advanced digital and connected systems. The company will purchase an existing facility in Waverly and install approximately \$8 million in equipment to establish new production and assembly operations. The \$18.2 million capital investment is expected to create 275 jobs, including 25 incented at a qualifying wage of \$28.52 per hour. The board awarded the company \$660,000 in tax credits through the BIG program.

(Contact: Kristi Kiou 2-5290)

Education

House Passes Multiple Higher Education Priorities

On Tuesday, the House passed four Higher Education priorities. They keep state licensing boards from mandating continuing education requirements like DEI that are unrelated to their profession. Another prohibits private universities from maintaining DEI offices. A third forces the University of Iowa's nursing program to make room for more Iowans. The last one imposes a five year tuition freeze for Iowa undergraduates at our public universities. Iowa students need to have access to an affordable education from our state funded institutions.

- [HF 2246](#): Continuing Education Requirements for Licensed Individuals
 - Continuing education requirements for those licensed by the Board of Educational Examiners and the Department of Inspections, Appeals, and Licensing shall relate directly to the practice of the licensed profession.
 - The Supreme Court shall not include any continuing education requirements for attorneys that are not directly related to the practice of law and shall not require graduation from an ABA accredited law school to sit for the Iowa Bar Exam, although individuals still have to go to law school prior to sitting for the Iowa Bar Exam.
- [HF 2488](#): Private Colleges are not Eligible to Receive the Iowa Tuition Grant if they have DEI Offices
 - A private college shall not establish, sustain, support, or staff a DEI office. If they do, they are not eligible to receive Iowa Tuition Grants.
- [HF 2226](#): The U of I must admit 70% of Students from Iowa for their Nursing Program
 - Requires the Board of Regents to adopt a policy requiring 70% of students accepted into the University of Iowa Bachelor of Science in nursing program are residents of Iowa.
- [HF2242](#): The Regents Universities Must Freeze Tuition for 5 Years
 - Prohibits the Regent universities from increasing their tuition or mandatory fees to resident undergrad students for five years.

Screen Time Limited in K-5 Legislation

House File 2451 is a bipartisan bill limiting daily "digital instruction" for K-5 students to 60 minutes, exempting specialized, teacher-led, or mandated testing activities.

The bill regulates the use of digital tools in education to balance technology's benefits with potential risks, particularly for younger students. The bill caps digital instruction—defined as lessons, assignments, assessments, or activities delivered via laptops, tablets, computers, smart devices, software platforms, or similar tools—at no more than 60 minutes per school day for students in kindergarten through fifth grade.

Certain uses do not count toward the 60-minute cap such as technology required by an individualized education program (IEP) or a Section 504 plan under the federal Rehabilitation Act.

According to sciencedirect.com, 58% of school-aged children (5-15 years) engage in extreme screen time (more than 3 hours daily), with probabilities increasing by nearly 40% per additional year of age.

A National Institutes of Health study of over 11,000 children found that more than 2 hours of daily screen time correlates with lower scores on language and thinking tests, while over 7 hours is linked to premature thinning of the brain's cortex, affecting critical thinking and reasoning.

According to edtechmagazine.com, excessive screen time leads to emotional dysregulation and poorer performance in math and literacy among children aged 4-8.

Edweek.org reports that eighty percent of educators report worsened student behavior with increased screen time, including trouble concentrating (83%), acting out (81%), and frequent absenteeism (75%).

Limiting digital instruction to 60 minutes daily in K-5 could help curb these risks, promoting healthier, more effective learning environments. The American Academy of Pediatrics supports similar limits, recommending no more than 1 hour per day for ages 2-5 and 2 hours for older children.

(Contact: Kristin Rozeboom 1-3015)

Health and Human Services

House Advances Health and Human Services Legislation

This week House floor debate began by passing many bills from the House Health and Human Services to address biological reality, physician workforce, mental health, child support and child care. Below are some of the bills that passed and are now eligible to be considered by the Iowa Senate.

Pregnant Female – House File 2253 changes outdated references in Iowa Code from “pregnant person” to “pregnant female.” This bill is common-sense and recognizes biological reality. It’s imperative that in these important areas of code regarding feticide, pregnancy injury, and assault, laws are specific and clear. Iowa’s laws need to be factual, consistent and prioritize clarity over ideology. Unfortunately, all House Democrats opposed this common-sense legislation.

Child Care Worker CCA – House File 2514 makes child care employees providing care directly to children eligible to receive Child Care Assistance if working at least 32 hours per week and have children enrolled in child care. DHHS has been providing this coverage through a pilot program since July 2023. In January 2025, DHHS presented that 2,105 families have been served by the pilot with an average of 302% FPL. This bill helps attract and retain individuals to work in child care.

UIHC Noncompetes – House File 2254 prohibits noncompete agreements for physicians at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. UIHC has a noncompete agreement that they require physicians to sign that prohibits the physician from working within fifty miles for two years. As UIHC expands to multiple locations throughout the state and is the primary physician training institution in Iowa, this bill is becoming more necessary to retain physicians to the state rather than having them leave the state to practice. The UI presented this week that 46% of physicians that have stopped practicing in Iowa are relocating out-of-state. This bill is a step forward to prohibit the fear of litigation to remain in Iowa to practice. Unfortunately, the majority of House Democrats voted against this bill.

Child Support Interest – House File 2519 requires unpaid child support to collect interest automatically rather than requiring a court order after 30 days of not paying. 15 states already collect and assess interest on all cases without a court order. In Iowa, there is \$665.4 million of child support debt owed to families with even \$68.9 million being delinquent for the last year. This bill removes a barrier for a single parent to go to court and ensures more timely payment from a payee that doesn't want 10% interest to be added to their payment. Unfortunately, 13 House Democrats voted against this bill.

Minor Mental Health Commitments – House File 2523 removes the ability for a minor to refuse mental health or substance abuse treatment if the parent is seeking voluntary treatment for their minor. This bill aligns mental health care with all of mental health and doesn't allow a suicidal child to veto their parent's and health care provider's decision that the child needs mental health care. Unfortunately, most House Democrats opposed this bill.

(Contact: Natalie Ginty 5-2063)

Judiciary

Stopping Human Trafficking Takes the Entire State

Human trafficking might not be a crime you think of every day, but it's happening all around the state from small towns to the big cities. Without help from across the state, many of these victims never receive justice. The House Judiciary Committee worked on two key pieces of legislation to catch the traffickers and help victims.

House File 2565 creates a special team, known as the Iowa Human Trafficking Task Force, within the Department of Public Safety. This group will be the main point of contact for all issues related to human trafficking in Iowa. The task force is made up of law enforcement officers, investigators with expertise in human trafficking and white-collar crimes, specialists in cybercrime, as well as victim advocates and emergency dispatchers. To make sure the entire state is covered, the team is divided geographically, with each region receiving its own investigators and support personnel. The task force will have the authority to make arrests and will work closely with other law enforcement agencies in the state. Because human trafficking is such a serious issue, the teams will run a 24/7 office and call centers so there is always someone available, even on weekends and holidays, to respond quickly to tips or emergencies.

On top of investigating cases, the task force will be responsible for collecting data, developing strategies, and coordinating training programs for other agencies so they can better spot and help victims. Every year, the team will report their results and recommendations to the Iowa legislature.

The second part of the bill strengthens prosecution. It requires the Attorney General's office to set up a special unit for prosecuting human trafficking-related crimes. Four assistant attorneys general, each representing a different part of the state, will focus solely on taking these cases to court. The team will collaborate with the task force, ensuring that investigations and prosecutions are tightly connected.

In addition to HF 2565, the committee also advanced HF 2696. This bill will allow victims of human trafficking to petition the courts to expunge their criminal history related to their human trafficking. Unfortunately, victims of human trafficking can be forced to commit crimes, and sometimes they are charged and convicted, even though they are also victims. This bill allows those individuals to ask for a clean slate to start their lives over.

Human trafficking may not always be noticeable but with the right groups and training it can be stopped. HF 2565 and HF 2696 are great steps towards ending this despicable crime and saving the victims.

(Contact: Amanda Wille 1-5230)

Labor

New VR Town Hall Series: Understanding Workforce Services for Iowans with Disabilities

Iowans with disabilities make up a significant and often underestimated portion of our state's talent pool. Ensuring they have access to meaningful employment opportunities not only strengthens their own individual independence, but it also drives new growth across Iowa's economy.

A new series of town halls aims to help various stakeholders and the public better understand the full range of services that are making a difference for this critical area of the workforce.

The *VR Town Hall* series will feature updates from both Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the Iowa Department of the Blind, who together partner on the many programs that together improve disability employment across the state. Each townhall will focus on a specific program area.

2026 VR Town Hall Dates

Hosted by Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the Iowa Department of the Blind

- March 24, 2026, 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm (Topic: Pre-ETS)
 - [Town hall Link \(Zoom\)](#)
- June 23, 2026, 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm (Topic: Self-Employment)
 - [Town hall Link \(Zoom\)](#)
- September 22, 2026, 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm (Topic: Assistive Technology)
 - [Town hall Link \(Zoom\)](#)
- December 22, 2026, 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm (Topic: Job Readiness)
 - [Town hall Link \(Zoom\)](#)

Series Flyer

- [View Flyer: 2026 VR Town hall Series \(869.72 KB\).pdf](#)

(Information from Iowa Workforce Development)

(Contact: Kristin Rozeboom 1-3015)

Local Government

Local Government's Funnel Survivors

The House Local Government Committee passed seven bills out of the committee during funnel week, bringing the total number of bills passed before the funnel to fifteen. Below is a summary of each bill that survived the first funnel.

HF 2255/HF 2061 - Redaction of Elected Officials Personally Identifiable Information

Expands the eligibility to request redaction of personally identifiable information from public websites for members of the General Assembly and federal and statewide elected officials. Directs the Secretary of State to submit recommendations for how to protect such information for those seeking election while verifying their residency.

Status: House Calendar

HF 2252/HSB 618 – Accessory Dwelling Unit Cleanup

Clarifies several definitions from last year’s law requiring the allowance of ADUs by cities and counties to define the size calculations of ADUs and primary residential units. Clarifies that cities and counties can only regulate ADUs in historical preservation districts to the extent that other buildings are regulated based on historical, architectural, archaeological, or cultural aspects of the district.

Status: House Calendar

HF 936/HSB 192 - Open Records for Government Body Instrumentalities

Amends the definition of “government body” to include the instrumentality of a city or township for the examination of public records.

Status: House Calendar

HF 2517/HSB 634 - Flags at half-staff on public buildings

Amends code to require that public buildings shall have the U.S. and Iowa flags flown at half-staff when directed by a proclamation issued by the Governor. Alleged violations of this requirement can be reported to the Attorney General, who may initiate action in the name of the state.

Status: House Calendar

HF 2157 - Abandonment of Dogs and Cats

Amends to code to require an animal shelter volunteer or employee to accept the dog/cat to not be considered abandoned. Under current law county attorneys cannot prosecute individuals who drop animals off outside the shelter.

Status: Passed House of Representatives

HF 2520/HSB 639 - Short-Term and Expected Vacancies for City and County Officials

This bill would prohibit a petition to force special elections to fill vacancies for county and city officials if the remainder of the term is less than 6 months. Also creates an opportunity for elected county and city officials to submit in writing at least 73 days before the next general election to their governing board the known date they will leave the office to allow the council or board to declare a vacancy and allow the position to be filled at the next general election for the remainder of the office’s term

Status: Passed House of Representatives

HF 2522/HSB 660 - Public Officer Insurance Policies

Strikes the requirement that the beneficiary of insurance policies for public officials (in lieu of bond) is the State of Iowa. Insurance policy contracts will be written on behalf of the appropriate governmental body and paid out to the body. Current code does not allow for such a distinction and have not been able to issue yet.

Status: House Calendar

HF 2516/HSB 659 - Electric Fence Regulation on Nonresidential Properties

Defines parameters for electrically charged fences as “battery charged security alarm systems”. These systems can be up to 10 feet tall or 2 feet taller than the non-electrical perimeter/walls of the business. These systems must not transmit more than 12 volts of direct current, meet international electrotechnical commission standards, be located behind a nonelectric perimeter fence or wall of at least 5 feet in height, and have warning signed every 30 feet. Counties and cities cannot consider these systems fences and shall not adopt or enforce any ordinance or regulations to prohibit or regulate such systems.

Status: House Calendar

HF 2618/HF 2148 - Eliminating Smart Planning Principles

Repeals Chapter 18B, which requires state agencies, local governments, and public entities smart planning principles to consider 10 principles when considering zoning and development. Chapter 18B does not require the application of the principles creating confusion and debate in local communities about what is required when zoning decisions are being made. Does not change any laws for counties or cities concerning zoning regulations and processes.

Status: House Calendar

HF 2636/HF 2062 - Zoning Change Protests

Raises the threshold for a petition to zoning changes from 20% of property owners of the affected area to a majority. Lowers the threshold for a city council to approve a change following a filed petition from 3/4 to 2/3.

Status: House Calendar

HF 2623/HF 2191 – City and School Elections move to Even Years

Moves city and school district elections to even year general elections. Members who are serving on July 1, 2026 will serve their terms to the next odd year following their terms original end.

Status: House Calendar

HF 2638/HF 2388 – Public Records of Separated Public Employees

Expands the definition of public records to include specific details of a separated employee including their last date worked and any money or benefit paid to the individual as a result of the separation.

Status: House Calendar

HF 2595/HSB 731 - Local Mining Regulation

States the legislative intent to regulate mining in the State of Iowa to include local approval of licenses and permits.

Status: House Calendar

HF 2614/HF 2428 - Authorizing Fire Station Construction by Township Levies

Authorizes township trustees to reserve annually up to 30 cents per \$1000 of the assessed value of taxable property for the purpose of building a fire station.

Status: House Calendar

HF 2622/HSB 720 – Public Libraries

Requires public libraries to enact and enforce age-appropriate policies in order to qualify to receive public funds. Amends code that library boards are advisory only and city councils have authority and control over libraries.

Status: House Calendar

(Contact: Jason Covey 1-3626)

Natural Resources

Minerals and Hydrogen: Hot Topic for 2026

Iowans may already know that coal was mined in Iowa in the past, but what may not be known is that coal is the only reference to any mineral or mineral rights in the Iowa Code. In the past year, the issue of underground and subsurface rights has come to the forefront, most recently within the issue of hydrogen.

According to Iowa's Geological Survey, The State Geologist presented the Iowa State Geological Survey to the House Environmental Protection Committee, highlighting several deposits of subsurface hydrogen which have been mapped and confirmed in Iowa. Recently there are a few companies expressing interest in purchasing rights to mine Iowa's hydrogen. Republican legislators became interested upon learning no guardrails or protections existed for Iowans if/when this mining becomes profitable and offers for rights begin. Therefore, House Republicans have passed three bills out of the first funnel through the Natural Resources Committee, addressing separate areas of the topic.

The first of these bills HF 2531 was passed in floor debate on Wednesday, dealing primarily with requiring counties or cities who have acquired severed mineral/subsurface rights in the past to divest of them to the surface owner. A secondary item in this bill expands the law to cover mineral interests instead of just coal. The two other bills deal with

surface owner protection (HF 2702), and the regulatory framework for mineral rights and financial guardrails for offers to landowners (HF 863). Stay tuned on this topic as the three bills make their way through the legislative process.

(Contact: Mindy Larsen 1-3096)

Public Safety

Top Five Reported Consumer Complaints and Scams According to the Attorney General's Office

The Attorney General has released a report listing the ten top reported consumer complaints and scams. According to the press release there were over 4,000 complaints filed in 2025. Knowing what to look for can help you and your loved ones avoid some of the most common scams.

The article below is an abbreviated version of the Attorney General's [press release](#) from February 19, 2026. Here are the top Five Consumer Complaints and Scams:

1. Used Auto & Vehicle Repair (783 Complaints)

- Faulty repair work (148 complaints)
- Failure to disclose prior damage in the sale of used cars (124 complaints)
- Financing and leasing issues, including misrepresentations regarding optional products such as extended warranties and gap insurance (83 complaints)

Be aware of these warning signs including suspicious recommendations for complicated car repairs or the lack of a used vehicle's history.

2. Imposter (398 Complaints)

These scams include fake job offers, online shopping scams, lottery scams, romance scams, and IRS/social security scams. Many of these scams are circulated through text messages, phone calls, e-mail, or social media. Some tips to avoid imposter scams include:

- Work with established sellers and be wary of unsolicited messages.
- Avoid sending money electronically (e.g., Cash App, cryptocurrency, PayPal, etc.) or through a cryptocurrency ATM to people you have never met.
- Remember law enforcement and government agencies will never threaten arrest for refusing to give information or pay money over the phone.

3. Internet (319 Complaints)

Internet-related complaints include social media issues; disputes with internet service providers; and Terms of Service or data privacy concerns. This also includes complaints about malicious software, unsolicited emails, subscription issues with online apps, and online auction scams.

The Attorney General reminds you to do the following:

- Thoroughly research online sellers, meet at secure locations, and avoid prepaying.
- Verify a subscription and/or cancel it by independently contacting the company via its official channels.
- Reach out to the Attorney General's office for help with locked or hacked accounts.

4. Home Improvement (247 Complaints)

Home improvement complaints include contractors' failure to start or complete jobs, poor workmanship quality, and issues with the sales, installation, and financing of solar panels.

5. Housing & Realty (244 Complaints)

Housing and realty complaints involve rental housing, real estate sales, manufactured and mobile homes, and home building. Iowans often report false or misleading information and/or hidden, extra charges. Common complaints also involve mortgages, inflated appraisals, foreclosure scams, and the use of a false identity for loan applications. The Iowa Attorney General's Office works hard to investigate fraud, seek reimbursement for victims, and ensure fair competition in the marketplace.

If you've been a victim of fraud, contact the Attorney General's office at 1-888-777-4590 or file a complaint online.

(Contact: Amanda Wille 1-5230)

State Government

House Passes Bill to Improve Election Laws

This week the Iowa House of Representatives passed [House File 2501](#) to address minor changes to Iowa's election laws. Thanks to the consistent work of the House Republican Caucus, Iowa's elections are already safe, secure, and efficient. Previous election law enhancements have ensured citizen verification of voters, accurate acceptance and counting of absentee ballots, streamlined and consistent recount procedures.

HF 2051 continues to address small technical fixes that have arisen after election cycles. If enacted, the bill will restore that the filing and challenging process for city and school officials are conducted by county auditors. Currently, if there is a challenge to the validity of a school board candidate's nomination papers the complaint is filed to the school board secretary and then considered by the school board president, secretary, and one other member of the board. By moving these procedures back to the county auditor's office suspicion of impropriety can be eliminated, keeping all election related processes with the county's election commissioners.

The legislation also strikes an outdated provision requiring county auditors to print USPS barcode on all absentee ballot envelopes. Under current law absentee ballots are required to arrive at the county auditor's office by poll close on election day. The barcode no longer impacts the counting of a ballot. However, as Iowans increasingly vote by absentee ballot, this requirement has become an undue election cost that is being paid by taxpayers. By eliminating this requirement, except for where a USPS barcode is necessary, taxpayers will save on election expenses for every election in every county and remove unnecessary steps for county auditors.

The work on election processes is never complete as after all elections new challenges and issues arise. House Republicans remain steadfast in ensuring that Iowa's elections are conducted in a fair, efficient, and secure manner.

(Contact: Jason Covey 1-3626)

Transportation

Transportation Committee Moves Bill to Address Growing Concern on the Roads – Commercial Drivers Who Cannot Speak English

One of the major issues in the transportation arena over the past year has been the proliferation of deadly accidents across the country involving people who somehow have gotten Commercial Driver's Licenses in spite of not being English proficient. The House Transportation Committee is working with Iowa's trucking community to take hard steps to prevent that from happening here.

The Committee last week passed a bill brought forward by the Iowa Motor Truck Association that would require those applying for a CDL to demonstrate English proficiency that meets the Federal Government's standards before they are given a license. And for those seeking to renew their CDL, they too would have to demonstrate English proficiency to have it renewed.

House File 2700 also addresses situations on the road when law enforcement has pulled over a commercial vehicle, and officers cannot communicate with the driver. The bill would impose a \$1000 fine and a criminal penalty of up to one year in jail for those drivers who are not English proficient.

The bill also holds commercial carriers responsible in these situations. House File 2700 would impose a fine for hiring a commercial driver not proficient in English to haul a load in Iowa. The fines would begin at \$3000 for the first incident and rise up to \$10,000 per incident. If law enforcement stopped a commercial vehicle and found the driver to not be English proficient, that vehicle would be held until the carrier sent a driver to take over. That driver must be English proficient. And before they could take off, the carrier would have to have paid any fines that resulted from that stop.

House File 2700 is now ready for debate on the House Floor.

(Contact: Brad Trow 1-3471)

Ways & Means

Red Tape Reduction Bill

This week a House Subcommittee passed House Study Bill 747. The bill requires the Secretary of State to establish a red tape reduction internet site. The site would give Iowans the opportunity to request information about executive branch regulatory restrictions and communicate with the Secretary of State's office about them. The goal is of the bill is to provide Iowans an easy way to ask their government "why does this restriction exist?" or explain why in real-life applications, a regulation is burdensome and unnecessary.

The legislation also requires the Secretary of State to submit a report each year to the General Assembly that details which regulations were the subject of communications, requests, and criticisms. The bill is now eligible to be considered by the full House Ways and Means Committee.

(Contact: Kristi Kious 2-5290)