



Capitol Comments

Newsletter from your
Iowa State Representative
Richard Anderson

State Capitol
March 17, 2011

Tis' St. Patrick's Day and wearin' o' the green is the attire of the day. Strains of "O Danny Boy" fill the air. It has been reported that the McGronstalls are looking for a pot of gold to fill our state budget of holes, while the O'Branstads are dreaming of emerald fields covering the state in but a few months. With Ag Extension supporters, Future Farmers of America and 4-H students visiting recently it seems that emerald acres of agriculture and education are on everyone's mind.

Protecting Our Emerald Iowa

With ever increasing international sales of Iowa agriculture products, bio-security is a growing concern. Producers and consumers want disease-free food production and distribution. We also expect humane care for our animals. In recent years, individuals have gained access to ag production facilities through fraud and deception, looking for evidence of animal neglect or mistreatment - sometimes bringing disease with them. Unauthorized access to, or trespass, brings an increased risk to the safety of the food production industry.

HF 589, which recently passed out of the Iowa House with bipartisan support, protects livestock and crop operations from unauthorized destruction, killing or injuring of stock, or disruption of agricultural operations. The bill also seeks to end fraudulent access to an animal or crop facility when the true intent of the person seeking access is hidden or misrepresented. The bill does NOT protect producers who mistreat or neglect their animals. It does promote prompt reporting of these instances to appropriate legal authorities who can undertake biologically safe and authorized investigations. The bill makes it unlawful to produce, possess, or distribute an

unauthorized recording (sound or image) at an animal or crop operation. It is hoped this bill will protect humans and animals by ensuring safe and humane food production.

Enhancing Green Acres Education

Recognizing the economic impact of agriculture in Iowa, the House unanimously voted to re-establish the Council for Agricultural Education that was repealed by legislation last year. The Council functioned well for nearly 20 years and assisted in the development of standards for secondary and postsecondary agricultural education. HF 592 restores the Council as it existed before its repeal. The Council consists of nine voting members appointed by the Governor including five persons representing all areas of agriculture and diverse geographical areas and ex officio members representing ag education. Building up ag education, builds up young farmers and builds up Iowa. Green acres is the place to be...farm living is the life for me.

Enhancing Iowa Education

The House Republicans, following the lead of President Obama and US Education Secretary Duncan, tried to strengthen Iowa's charter school law this week. Charter schools are unique public schools which are designed to increase learning opportunities for students through the use of innovative teaching methods and assessments. Charter schools are creating exciting dynamic opportunities around the nation. Yet, here in Iowa we seem to languish in bringing about real education change. Charter public schools, non-public schools and home schools continue to challenge our traditional public school establishment.

One day we will have to face the facts. We ask for higher performance to compete with the world, yet we continue to build our education system around a 180 day school year, while Asian students attend 210 to 230 days per year. By the time the Asian student graduates, he or she has two or more additional years of education and has taken more difficult coursework than comparable US students. No wonder they beat our socks off in education assessments.

Budget Negotiations Continue – There May Be a Blessing Coming

The supplemental appropriations for the current fiscal year and the new budget for the coming fiscal year continue. So stay tuned. Here in the State Capitol, I overheard this rather humorous Irish blessing:

“May those who love us, love us;
and those who don't love us, may God turn their hearts;
and if He doesn't turn their hearts,
may he turn their ankles so we'll know them by their limping.”

But to you, my fellow lowan, I offer this olde Irish blessing:

May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back,
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
The rains fall soft upon your fields and,
Until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of His hand.