

Sweeney from the Statehouse 2-12-10

Hello from the Statehouse. This is the first funnel week of this session, which means each chamber has to pass out of committee their bills to be considered this session. There are a few exceptions to this timeline. Because of the shortened session, it has become apparent that some legislation is being rushed and some legislative intent has been undermined. I have received multiple emails from constituents dealing with issues; the common concern is that the legislation is vague or rushed. I am working to correct many of these concerns.

A growing concern at the Capitol is the inability of the executive branch to deal with the state's shortfall of revenue. On Wednesday, State Auditor Vaudt released his review of the proposed budget for FY2011. It is the Auditor's conclusion that the proposed budget is \$25 million over the legal spending limit. If the legislature does not reduce the Governor's budget we could see increased property taxes and the continued use of state employees furloughs without pay. It is time we face what we financially can and cannot do, the state constitution requires a balanced budget.

With the economic crises this state is facing, you would think that the legislative leadership would be concentrating on creating jobs. Instead, the leadership in the Iowa House has been focusing their attention on weakening Iowa's Right-to-Work law. With growing fear that they might lose control of the House after the next election, they have decided this might be one of their few chances to weaken the Right-to-Work law, even though the public is overwhelmingly opposed to any change. Iowa's Right-to-Work law simply states that an employee has the choice to join a union or not. Non-union employees currently are not required to pay union dues, but this would change under this proposal. [HSB 702](#) was introduced on February 4 and it would repeal the Right-to-Work provisions afforded to Iowa's public employees and force a "fair share" fee or dues, upon non-union employees of the executive branch, including Regents. There is going to be a Public Hearing on this issue February 17, 2010 in the House Chamber from 5:00 to 8:00 pm, Time Limit per Testimony is three minutes, submission of written testimony is encouraged but not required, if you would like to testify call the Legislative Information Office (LIO) at 515-281-5129 or visit the LIO office in the basement of the Capitol, testimony may be emailed to the Legislative Information Office at www.lioinfo@legis.state.ia.us. Please type "Testimony" in the subject line.

According to the non-partisan Legislative Service Agency if passed, this legislation would bring in an estimated \$5.3 million to AFSCME and other unions. Presently, unions' total due paying revenue is \$5.6 million. This bill would allow unions to use the new "Fair Share" revenue for general operations and then convert most of the existing dues to campaign funds. In addition, this bill will allow unions to sue state employees for not paying their "Fair Share" fees. Iowa became a Right to Work state in 1947 and I am a firm believer that we should continue to be one. An overwhelming majority of Iowans are opposed to any changes in our Right-to-Work laws. No state has repealed their Right to Work statute and I will work hard to prevent Iowa from being the first.

We have just finished debate on the Government Reorganization Bill. There are always different views and concerns with legislation. I am proud of our legislators effort in trying to reduce the size of government. I ran an amendment that would put back into perspective the regulating rules of the Environment Protection Agency and the Natural Resource Commission which was defeated. It in no way took away our environmental laws or regulations; it simply put things back they way there were intended. It also included an idea that I got from visiting our schools, concerning the implementation of the Core Curriculum. It delayed the implementation for a year with a projected savings of 10.5 million. Empowerment is staying! We had a number of people here for the open hearing concerning Empowerment. Way to go everyone!

I am enjoying the job on which you have sent me. What fun I had this week when Pastor Bollhagen, from Trinity Lutheran LCMS, was my guest as the Pastor of the Day. He said he had

his daily workout when he took the tour to the top of the capitol dome! Next week after the open hearing I will send out a mid-week email blast to keep you posted.
As always, keep up the communication and may spring come soon!