

Iowa House of Representatives

State Representative Cecil Dolecheck

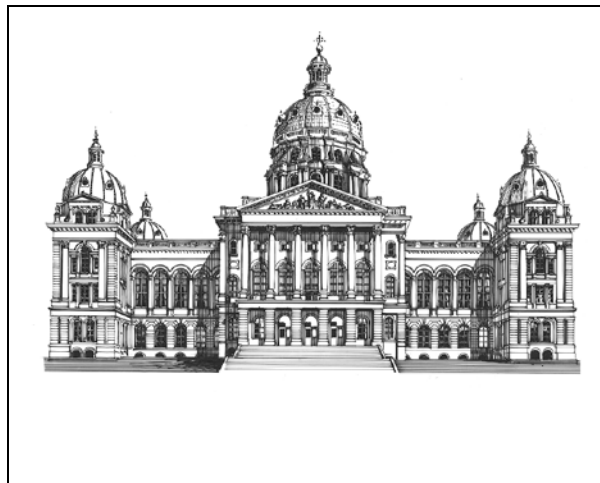
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For the week of February 21, 2011



Collective Bargaining

The issue of collective bargaining is a hot topic around the nation. Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio, and most recently Iowa, have been focal points for a debate about each state's own process for collective bargaining.

In Wisconsin, Democrat Senators fled the state in order to prevent a vote that forces public employees to pay for a portion of their health insurance and pension plans. The bill also eliminates collective bargaining rights except in relation to wages. Republicans in Wisconsin control both the Senate and the House as well as the Governor's office. Gov. Walker has vowed a vote on the bill and is not interested in a compromise.

Iowans are not unfamiliar with the issue that is being debated in Indiana where a scene similar to Wisconsin was set as Democrat House members have reportedly fled the state. Republicans in Indiana are attempting to pass Right-to-Work legislation, which prevents any worker from being forced to join or pay dues to a union to get or keep a job. The current arrangement, also known as "Fair Share," forces non-union workers to pay union dues regardless of their membership in the union. Iowa is currently a Right to Work state, and Iowa Democrats attempted to change that in 2007 by repealing those provisions in Iowa law. Their attempts ultimately failed in the House after the bill had originally passed the Senate.

Iowa had its own run in with labor issues this week. Wednesday saw a protest from union members, and a counter-protest from Tea Party members. Also under discussion that afternoon was the subcommittee on HSB 117, which is a bill sponsored by the majority party that affects the collective bargaining law in Iowa. The subcommittee heard from a variety of individuals who spoke for and against the bill. The major changes in the bill include: the ability of a public employee to opt out of representation by the union, allowing the state to control what portion state employees pay for insurance (currently, 84% of state employees pay **no** premiums for health insurance), allowing an arbitrator to make a decision between two opposing sides during the arbitration process (currently, the arbitrator must only choose either side A's offer or side B's offer), forcing the arbitrator to compare public and private wages and benefits when possible (currently, the arbitrator does not have to compare to private wages or benefits), and forbidding the arbitrator from considering past bargaining agreements when negotiating new contracts.

The bill will continue to be worked on by both parties to provide input into making the bill better. The bill will move on to the full Labor committee before it is sent to the House floor.

Department of Economic Development Reorganization

The Governor's office has filed a bill that would serve as a structural reorganization of the current Department of Economic Development. HSB 103 is the second attempt at creating a public-private collaboration to take care of the state's economic development needs. The Iowa Partnership for Economic Progress (IPEP), coupled with the Economic Progress Authority and the Economic Progress Corporation would all work together to attract new business and expand existing businesses in Iowa.

The Economic Progress Partnership is a board of individuals chaired by either the Governor or Lieutenant Governor. The seven member board is appointed by the Governor and is composed of individuals within the

private sector or who have expertise in the area of economic development. This board develops a comprehensive economic development strategy that is implemented by the two other portions of the new plan.

The Economic Progress Authority is the public portion of the public-private collaboration. The Authority takes the place of the current Department of Economic Development, and assumes all of its duties and responsibilities. A seven member board is appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate to oversee distribution of state funds for economic development projects. The board also contains four ex-officio legislative members to maintain oversight over taxpayer dollars.

The Economic Progress Corporation is the private portion of the public-private collaboration. The new Corporation is a nonprofit that qualifies as a 501 (3)(c) under federal law and a 504 under Iowa law. The Corporation is **not** considered an agency, department or administrative unit of the state. This also means that the Corporation **cannot** receive appropriations from the General Assembly. The Corporation can, however, contract for the performance of assigned duties by the Economic Progress Authority. Any state dollars that are used by the Corporation are open and be subject to sunshine and oversight provisions currently afforded state agencies. The Corporation is established so that donations and bequests qualify as tax deductible under federal and state income tax laws.

There have already been two subcommittees on the proposed bill, and work continues to be done before the Economic Growth committee takes up the bill sometime next week.

Agriculture

On Wednesday February 23, 2011, the House Agriculture Committee passed several bills that consolidate certain agricultural product inspection duties into the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS). House Study Bill 110 shifts certain egg inspection regulatory functions and House Study Bill 111 consolidates milk inspection into IDALS from the Department of Inspections and Appeals and the Department of Public Health. It makes sense to have IDALS work with the Federal Food & Drug Administration (FDA) on inspecting egg farms since IDALS already has the State Veterinarian and regional veterinarians and animal, farm and facility inspections.

While IDALS doesn't currently address eggs, it does regulate sellers of baby chicks. The recently adopted FDA regulations contract nearly all of the new regulatory duties imposed last summer to a pertinent state agency. The FDA rules that became effective on July 9, 2010 apply to farms with more than 50,000 chickens with regulations expanding as of July 9, 2012 to apply to farms with over 3,000 chickens.

The other bill consolidating food/animal regulations into IDALS is HSB 111. Currently, IDALS is responsible for dairy inspections across the state. HSB 111 provides that surveys will continue in order to maintain food safety and commerce but will be housed in one Department within state government. IDALS has been told that besides Iowa, there is only 1 other state that has the survey officers in two separate departments. Missouri recently transitioned to having one department have the responsibility for both functions. IDALS has spoken to officials in both Nebraska and Missouri and both agencies agree that moving the ratings officers into one Department has made their work more efficient and communication is better with the client (dairy plants and farms).

What do you think? Email me your thoughts. My e-mail address is :

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Visitors to the House include : Dallas Johnson of Adams County Farm Bureau, Raymond Shields, Jay Fischer, Colby Holmes and Andy Jackson of Taylor County Farm Bureau, Gordon Winkler, Teresa Roberts and Kathy Schuster of Ringgold County Hospital.

Information about my legislative forum schedule, past newsletters and biography can be found at www.iowahouserepublicans.com/members/cecil-dolecheck