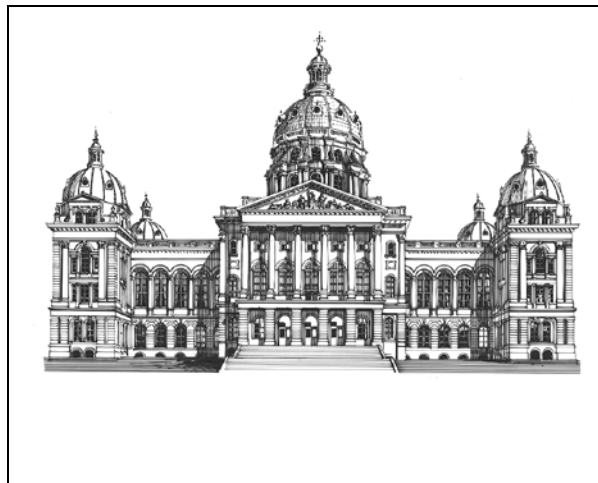


Iowa House of Representatives State Representative Cecil Dolecheck Dolecheck's Details

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For the week of March 28th, 2011



House Unveils Conservative Spending Outline for FY 2013

During the campaign Governor Branstad promised to push for a biennial budget. House Republicans have heard that call and this week unveiled an austere budget for FY 2013.

Since FY 2013 is still 15 months out, the House is taking a conservative approach to the state budget. The increase to the budget subcommittee areas is only 0.78 percent compared to the House Republican budget targets for FY 2012. If the December 2011 REC estimate allows for additional spending, it will allow for increases in priority areas during the 2012 session.

In addition, instead of using the bulk of the new revenue for new expenditures, the blueprint will fulfill commitments to the property taxpayers and fix budget problems left by previous administrations.

Of the total increase in expenditures, \$60 million is used to shift notwithstanding from the Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund (RIIF) to the general fund. The big ticket items are tuition replacement (\$25 million), technology funding (\$17.5 million), lake dredging (\$8.6 million) and flood prevention (\$3.3 million).

The targets also account for an additional \$65 million to fully fund the property tax credits, which is dollar-for-dollar property tax relief. The credits – homestead, agriculture land and family farm, military and elderly disabled – haven't been fully funded for over a decade. This will increase the total funding of the credits from \$145 million to \$210 million for FY 2013.

The last component is a built-in increase for Medicaid. Since Medicaid is a federal entitlement program, it must be funded at a certain level. The average increase for Medicaid (not counting the use of one-time funds or other funding sources) is about \$45 million per year. The House budget targets build in \$45 million for the FY 2013 increase with the knowledge that the number may need to be adjusted in 2012.

In total, general fund expenditures for FY 2013 will increase by \$222.6 million compared to the House FY 2012 budget targets, an increase of 3.77 percent. This conservative rate of growth will be criticized as not nearly enough. However, it represents the House majority party philosophy that a certain rate of growth in government is needed for priorities and the rest should be returned to the taxpayers.

I believe that the taxpayers should have a seat at the table and ongoing spending must be aligned with ongoing revenue to ensure that the budget is sustainable in the future.

House Passes Department of Economic Development Reorganization

On Monday, the House passed HF 590. The bill, referred to as IPEP (Iowa Partnership for Economic Progress), reorganizes the Department of Economic Development into a new public Authority (Economic Development Authority), a private non-profit Corporation (Economic Development Corporation), and a vision board (Partnership for Economic Progress).

HF 590 went through a number of different forms, and was heavily worked on in subcommittee, committee, and the House floor. A number of Republican and Democrat, amendments were accepted. The bill changes the status quo in regards to state economic development efforts. It also puts in place a number of safeguards.

The new makeup of the economic development arm of government will allow for a more timely and flexible approaches to economic trends in Iowa.

Stopping Contraband Cell Phones in Prisons

Corrections officers are facing a new challenge in keeping contraband out of prisons. Cell phones are being smuggled into the prison system at an alarming rate. According to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, in 2010 there were 10,760 cell phones found in correctional facilities around the state. With such troubling statistics, it's only a matter of time before Iowa is facing this issue on a large scale. House File 615/Senate File 124 were written to include penalties for those who provide prisoners with cell phones and for prisoners who possess the contraband while incarcerated.

A cell phone in prison is more than simple contact to the outside world. Cell phones have been used to intimidate witnesses, conduct drug deals and in one case a prisoner ordered the murder of a witness from his prison cell. Prisoners have also used text messaging and internet capabilities on phones to plan riots and escapes, some of the escapes have been successful.

Fortunately, in Iowa there was only one reported case of a cell phone found as contraband in the Department of Corrections for 2010. Unfortunately, judging by trends seen in California and Texas, the numbers won't stay low for long. Under the bill, a person who helps smuggle a cell phone into a correctional facility or who possesses a cell phone while in a correctional facility commits a class "D" felony which is punishable by up to 5 years in prison and a fine between \$750 and \$7,500.

While some opposed the bill for various reasons, the majority of the House took a stance on criminal contraband in holding facilities and passed SF 124 with bipartisan support. This legislation provides correctional officers with the support they need to keep jails and prisons safe and secure.

Dove Hunting

The Iowa House and Senate both passed, and the Governor signed, the bill allowing the Department of Natural Resources to establish a dove hunting season.

Redistricting

The new maps of the first redistricting plan were passed out at 8:15am this morning. The plans will undergo a two week public comment period before the legislature can give an up or down vote on the first plan. You can take a look at the maps illustrating the plan through the internet on the Iowa Redistricting link on the Iowa General Assembly's website www.legis.iowa.gov.

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

cecil.dolecheck@legis.state.ia.us The number for the House switchboard is 515-281-3221, Seat 65

Visitors to the House include : John Allen, Duane Shaefer, Carol Baker, and Phil Kinser of Southwest Iowa REC, Karl Peterson and 23 Lenox High School students.

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