

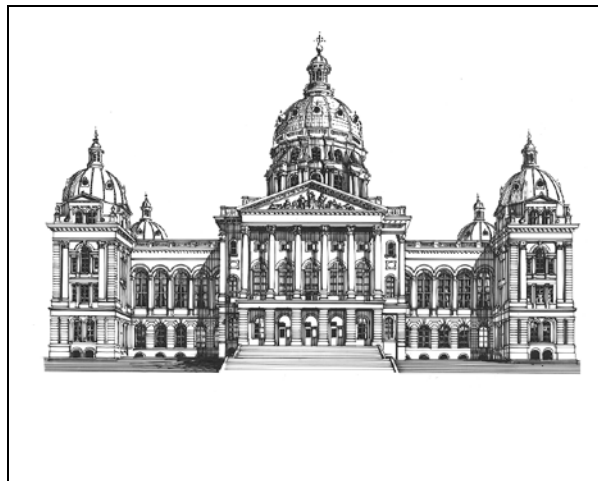
# Iowa House of Representatives

## State Representative Cecil Dolecheck

### Dolecheck's Details

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**For the week of March 7th, 2011**



## Chapter 20 Reform Bill

We are continuing debate in the Iowa House on minimal revisions to our State's collective bargaining law. House File 525 makes changes to Chapter 20, the collective bargaining portion of Iowa Code, that restores the balance of negotiation to a more equal playing field. The bill creates a free agent employee classification and addresses the scope of negotiations as well as portions of the arbitration process.

### Section 1 – Free Agent Employee

This section creates a classification called a free agent employee. This free agent employee would not be represented by a union. The employee would have to sign a release waiving any claim to right to representation by that union.

### Section 2 – Free Agent Employee

This section adds the ability to declare oneself a free agent employee to the list of Public Employee Rights.

### Section 3 – Scope of Negotiations

This section removes 'insurance' and 'procedures for staff reduction' from the scope of negotiations. The section also creates a list of items to be explicitly excluded from the scope of negotiations. Already included in this category was 'all retirement systems'. To it, the bill adds:

- 'health insurance or any other insurance'
- 'restrictions or limitations on outsourcing'
- 'any restriction on the right of a public employer to consider any factor which the employer may lawfully consider in a layoff'

### Section 4 – Binding Arbitration

This section makes two important changes. The first is that it gives an arbitrator the ability to choose either party's final request on an impasse item **or** to make a decision on an amount/number/etc. that is between the two parties. Currently, the arbitrator is forced to choose between just the two options that the parties have put forth as their last best offers. Secondly, the section changes the criteria that the arbitrator is allowed to consider when making his/her decision.

Criteria *added* to the list of items the arbitrator considers includes:

- comparison of benefits
- comparison of public employees with public employees not represented by a union
- comparison of public employees with private sector employees

- the directive for the arbitrator to attempt to maintain parity between the public sector and the private sector for comparable work giving consideration to similar and equitable economic conditions where applicable
- the ability of the public employer to finance economic adjustments **without raising any tax**
- efficiency of the public employer in its ability to carry out any of its functions

The section also *deletes* two provisions that the arbitrator is required to consider:

- ‘past collective bargaining contracts between the parties including the bargaining that led up to such contracts
- ‘the power of the public employer to levy taxes and appropriate funds for the conduct of its operations’

As of mid-morning on Thursday we have debated 6 of the 104 amendments filed. We started the debate at 2:00pm on Wednesday, recessed at 11pm and resumed at 7am this morning. It is quite possible the debate will last well into Friday and possible the weekend.

## **House Passes New Preschool Plan**

The House passed a new preschool plan on Tuesday by a vote of 55 to 45. The plan would replace the current preschool plan that has been in place since 2007 and is the result of collaboration between the governor’s office and the department of education.

The new plan that passed the chamber this week is a fair and balanced middle ground to the preschool problem. It continues ensuring quality by using much similar language to the existing program, including some further standards such as requiring participating preschools to meet the quality guidelines of Head Start, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, or Iowa’s Quality Public Preschool Standards. But it ensures this quality while only providing money for those most in need of assistance.

Contrary to the minority party talking points, the new bill will not lower quality, will not reduce access to preschool, and will not throw out all of the work that has been done. It still accounts for quality and requires providers to meet minimum standards, requires teachers with bachelor’s degrees and early childhood certification, requires an assessment to track progress, and requires collaboration with other agencies and entities providing early childhood services.

Under the current plan, if a school district chooses not to participate (and 34 don’t), then four year olds in that district do not have the option to participate in the state’s program. The new program will allow any preschool in a district to make that decision, not just the public school. This will help cover 4 year olds in every district. The new program will not pay for preschool for those who can afford to pay for it themselves. The new program will not force private providers to compete with the state at the school district’s discretion. It is a program that gives assistance to those most in need, allows parents a choice of the eligible providers in the district and allows private preschools a stronger voice in the system.

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

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Visitors to the House include : Barb Ray and Charla Schmid of Red Oak.

Information about my legislative forum schedule, past newsletters and biography can be found at [www.iowahousepublicans.com/members/cecil-dolecheck](http://www.iowahousepublicans.com/members/cecil-dolecheck)