

Dwayne Alons
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
Fourth District
Statehouse: (515) 281-3221
e-mail - dwayne.alons@legis.state.ia.us



COMMITTEES
Appropriations
Human Resources
Public Safety
Veterans Affairs

HOME ADDRESS
1314 7th Street
Hull, Iowa 51239
Home: (712) 439-2479

House of Representatives
State of Iowa
Eighty-Third General Assembly
STATEHOUSE
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
Administration and Regulation,
Ranking Member

How Much Snow in DC?

The District of Columbia, the federal government, and most organizations remain snowed in this week. Federal offices have been closed since last Friday afternoon when the first snow storm hit the District. The second storm passed through on the 9th and 10th. So how much snow has fallen in the nation's capital? So much snow that the Senate had to cancel a committee hearing on global warming.

Traditional Marriage – NO!

On Tuesday, Republicans made a move to bring HJR 6, the Marriage Amendment, out of committee. HJR 6, co-sponsored by Dwayne Alons and Delores Mertz, would bring the issue to a vote of the people for defining marriage in Iowa as the union of one man and one woman. Passage of the resolution would place the issue on the ballot for Iowans to approve or reject the idea that same-sex marriage should not be the law of Iowa as directed by the Iowa Supreme Court's decision. I am deeply disappointed that the majority party's leadership is adamantly against the people voting on this amendment in spite of the fact that our Constitution states that "all political power is inherent in the people." What is more troubling than just the rejection of traditional marriage as the standard for our society is that we have a legislature that has abdicated its power of making law to the judiciary which is supposed to only interpret the law.

Veterans Bills Ready for Debate or Passed

HF 2237 – Freeze of Homestead Tax Credit for Disabled Veterans

This bill freezes the property tax on a disabled, at 50% or more, veteran's homestead so that it does not increase from year to year, but remains at the same level as when it was purchased. The veteran does not have to file for successive years so long as the property is still owned and used by the veteran as a homestead. The bill passed the committee on February 9 by a vote of 14-1.

HSB 633 – Assignment of Visitation Rights for Active Duty Soldiers on Deployment

A parent who has been granted court-ordered visitation for their minor child and gets activated to serve overseas, can apply with the court for a temporary transfer of visitation rights to a family member. The temporary transfer would end when the service activation ends. The bill passed the committee on February 4 by a vote of 16-0.

HF 2198 – Veteran's Parade Trailers

Veteran's service organizations will no longer have to pay registration fees for trailers that are used exclusively for the transportation, display, and distribution of flags honoring deceased veterans in parades or ceremonies held on Memorial Day, Veterans Day, other patriotic occasions as authorized by resolution of the local government of the community where the parade or ceremony takes place. This bill did pass unanimously from the House floor.

Taxpayers Left Guessing On How to File Their Tax Returns

As you know, because Iowa tax laws are rooted in federal tax code, each year the Iowa Department of Revenue proposes the Internal Revenue Code Update bill, which modifies Iowa's income tax law to reflect the changes made by Congress to the federal income tax code. The federal income tax code often changes from year to year to permit certain deductions for federal income tax purposes. The legislature typically conforms or "couples" with the changes made by Congress. However, the legislature also has the ability to not act or not conform.

Last year, taxpayers and tax preparers were instructed by the Department of Revenue to file their income taxes for 2008 as if Iowa would couple with the federal changes. However, legislative Democrats prohibited the bill from coming to the House floor for a vote. As a result, many individuals filed their income taxes incorrectly, and in some cases are just now learning that they must amend their 2008 returns and pay back a portion of their refund or pay additional taxes.

With April 30th – the Iowa tax filing deadline – right around the corner, taxpayers and tax preparers are again asking legislators how to proceed with their 2009 state income tax returns. There are several deductions allowing taxpayers for federal tax purposes that would be available to Iowans if "coupling" is approved. An example of these include: excluding from gross income the first \$2,400 of unemployment insurance compensation, increasing the maximum income threshold for the Earned Income Tax Credit, the teacher expense credit, and the tuition deduction credit.

While the Department of Revenue did not assume the legislature would couple with the federal changes for tax year 2009 in its instructions, it is still uncertain if the legislature will pass an IRC Update bill this year. Therefore, when anyone calls me at the Capitol, I can only, regrettably, answer, "we simply don't know." The House Ways and Means Committee has yet to hold a subcommittee on the legislation and is unlikely to do so for another week or two, if at all. In the meantime, tax preparers should proceed with client tax preparations as if the legislature will not couple. Unfortunately for taxpayers, they will probably lose money either way. If the legislature couples with the federal changes after a taxpayer has filed the 2009 return, they will have to amend their returns to qualify for the tax benefit, which costs money. If the legislature fails to couple with the federal changes, then many tax benefits will not be available to taxpayers for state tax purposes, costing them money.

I understand the importance of passing an IRC Update bill early in the year in order to provide certainty to taxpayers. My colleagues and I will continue to urge the majority party to couple with the federal changes, which will put money back into the pockets of Iowans and do so sooner rather than later.

Upcoming legislative forums with Senator Randy Feenstra and Rep. Dwayne Alons:

Saturday, February 13, Pizza Ranch, Sioux Center, 12:00 noon

Saturday, February 20, Sheldon Tea Party, Iowa State Bank, 9:00 am

Saturday, February 20, Hull Pizza Ranch, 12:00 noon

Saturday, February 20, Boyden Public Library, 2:00 pm

Saturday, February 27, "Eggs and Issues," Forster Community Bldg, Rock Rapids, 8:00 am

Saturday, February 27, George Pizza Ranch, 10:30 am