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

APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
Administration and Regulation,
Ranking Member

Where are the Jobs?

2nd week – Committee work and sub committee meetings but nothing to help create jobs or improve Iowa’s economic picture.

Here is a review of what I see happening.

In the Veterans Affairs Committee, we debated and passed on a party line vote a bill that will draw benefits from the Unemployment Trust Fund for trailing spouses of reassigned military members. In this time of an all volunteer military force, I could not support this bill that would charge employers with an additional cost for unemployment benefits coverage during this economic downturn when there was already a 50% rate increase on Jan. 1, 2010.

In the Human Resources Committee, we are considering a new child care pilot project bill. This bill would draw existing state money away from current child care assistance to start a new program with higher rates to an undetermined provider (more than likely in Iowa City) for an undetermined number of children. Even Senator Gronstal says we don’t really have money for new programs, which I agree with, and could not support this bill as well.

The Human Resources Committee also moved a Mental Health Parity Bill to the House floor. The original House file was replaced with a strike after amendment that states an “intent” to have mental health and substance abuse parity coverage in Iowa. The problem with this bill is that the details are unknown, but Rep. Wessel-Kroeschell admitted that the bill would only apply to small business and individual policies as a mandate. Again that additional cost severely hits businesses and families in this environment of 15-20% health care premium costs rising each year for several years. Mental health may be more jeopardized with this bill when additional people are placed on the unemployment rolls.

Thursday morning was our first budget sub committee for Administration and Regulation. Ray Walton from the Dept. of Administrative Services (DAS) talked about how DAS is implementing the Governor’s 10% cut, how DAS is implementing an energy savings program to save approximately \$374,000 annually, how DAS is trimming costs for owning, maintaining and operating the state vehicle fleet. Mr. Walton talked about a possible savings of 6% for the DAS budget by operating on a 4-day work week. However, he cautioned that real savings may be less because many functions of government must operate on a 24/7 schedule. This presentation is the beginning of detailed scrutiny of the state’s budget. I believe there should be a sunset authorization of every state program. There should be a systematic process wherein EVERY

program funded by state government will be sunset (de-authorized) by a date certain unless the Governor and the Legislature reauthorize that program. This forces a top to bottom review of every existing program funded by state government to determine whether the program is effectively and efficiently meeting the needs for which it was created, or if the need even continues to exist. Programs no longer needed should be eliminated and those resources should be diverted to other priorities.

Culver Leaves Potential for \$400 million Property Tax Increase

Chet Culver's hype last week about a "big" surprise for K-12 education fell flat.

In his state-of-the-state message, Culver promised to cover just a fraction of the \$540 million "promissory note" looming for K-12 funding.

The \$540 million hole in the school aid formula for FY11 was created by two across-the-board cuts, one-time TARP money (federal stimulus) money, 2 percent allowable growth and the statewide voluntary preschool program.

Here's a quick breakdown of the \$540 million funding hole:

\$238 million - Culver's October 2009 - FY10 10 percent ATB

\$32 million - Culver's December 2008 - FY09 1.5 percent ATB

\$200 million - One-time TARP (Federal Stimulus funding)

\$43 million - 2 percent allowable growth for K-12 school aid

\$20 million - Estimated increase in 4 yr old preschool program

\$7 million - 2 percent allowable growth for categoricals (Teacher Comp, Class Size, Professional Dev.)

\$542 million - TOTAL K-12 school aid formula funding hole

Culver promised to partially backfill \$100 million of the \$238 million October ATB cut and to fund 2 percent allowable growth for the K-12 funding formula.

That leaves an overwhelming \$400 million that will likely fall on Iowa taxpayers.

Tightening Driving Restrictions on Teens

A presentation was given at the joint meeting of the House and Senate Transportation Committees on January 19 that suggested Iowa's graduated driver's license statute need to be updated. Several changes are included under proposed Senate File 3071.

Under the proposed law, 16 and 17 year olds would have to go a full year without any accidents or violations before their instruction permits would be upgraded to intermediate licenses. Current law only requires a teen to have the instruction permit and be accident/violation free for six months.

Senate File 3071 would also require that a teen with an intermediate license driving between 10:00pm and 5:00am to be accompanied by a licensed driver who is also a parent, guardian, custodian, family member at least 21 years of age, a driver's education instructor or prospective instructor, or a person at least 25 years of age who has the written permission of the parent of the intermediate licensee. This person must be seated next to the intermediate driver. This is a

change from current law which only requires the intermediate driver to be accompanied between the hours of 12:30am and 5:00am.

Currently, there is no limit on passengers an intermediate licensee can carry, so long as there are enough seatbelts. Senate File 3071 proposes that an intermediate licensee only be able to drive with one unrelated minor in the vehicle.

Violations under the new restrictions are classified as simple misdemeanors and are punishable by a scheduled fine of \$30.00.

This may be something coming from urban area studies, but I believe it would be a real negative for families with licensed teens in our rural areas. Let me know your thoughts.

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

Friday, January 29, Cedar Rock Grill, Rock Valley, 12:00 noon

Friday, January 29, Market Place Grille, Inwood, 2:00 p.m.

Saturday, January 30, Forster Community Bldg, Rock Rapids, "Eggs and Issues", 8:00 a.m.