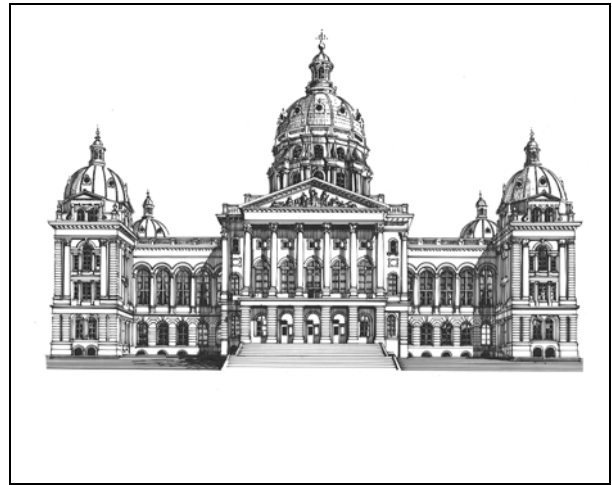


Iowa House of Representatives State Representative Cecil Dolecheck Dolecheck's Details

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**For the week of February 15th-February
19th, 2010**



Appropriations

Democrats Release Partial Budget Targets, Keep Important Details Hidden from Iowans

On Wednesday, February 17, the majority party released partial budget targets for the subcommittees. Once again, they only released the targets for the budget subcommittees, which flies in the face of budget transparency and being truthful to Iowans about the real cost of state government services.

This only shows roughly \$2.5 billion of the general fund budget. The release shows that the Democrats are \$475 million below the Governor in the subcommittee areas and will approve a general fund budget that spends the same amount as FY 2010.

Most of the reduction is in HHS, which would likely be an underfunding of Medicaid. This simply pushes the problem off until January because Medicaid is an entitlement and must be funded.

The release of partial targets does not give a sense of how much K-12 education will be underfunded, how much money will be shifted from the Cash Reserve Fund, or how much tax credits will be reduced.

Because the lack of detail makes it impossible to compare apples to apples, there is no way to know how much of the spending gap is being reduced due to the budget subcommittee targets.

House Republicans will be reviewing the Democrats' budget plan to if it does the following:

- The budget does not spend more than the state takes in
- Does not raise taxes, including property taxes
- Proposes real government efficiency and reorganization

In addition, we will continue to offer budget savings ideas, including the \$290 million in reductions offered on Senate File 2088, the State Government Reorganization bill.

School Property Taxes Increasing. The Question is: How Much?

School property taxes go up each year. That's because each year K-12 allowable growth increases both state aid and property taxes. Usually enrollment and taxable valuations are the key factors in predicting an individual district's property tax bill. But not in FY11.

The FY11 cost to fully fund 2% allowable growth next year is a whopping \$514 million.

The cost is so high because it includes the baggage of \$270 million from two across-the-board cuts, \$202 million in one-time federal stimulus money and a \$15 million jump in preschool costs.

School board members, taxpayers and legislators are looking for solutions. How much **will** the state pony up and how much **will** fall on the backs of the property tax payer? Shortfalls in state aid mean Iowa school districts must cut spending, use dwindling cash reserves, or ask the property tax payer to pick up the difference.

Governor Culver funds \$344 million of the \$514 million hole with state aid leaving a potential \$170 million property tax increase. Culver's state aid number includes taking \$100 million from the cash reserves. It remains unclear how House and Senate Democrats will deal with the \$514 million hole.

Iowa school districts are knee deep in teacher contract negotiations. They are half way through the budget hearing process. All eyes are on the April 15th budget certification date and April 30th "pink slipping" of teachers.

Critical decisions loom in the upcoming weeks. And very soon Iowa taxpayers may be called upon to pick up the baggage.

Adjutant General Timothy Orr Delivers First Condition of the Guard

With the retirement of General Ron Dardis early last year, the Legislature welcomed his replacement, Adjutant General Timothy Orr, to deliver his first Condition of the Guard speech to the State on Tuesday.

General Orr focused on three key areas in his speech: review where the Guard has come over the last several years, discuss the agenda for the next year, and highlight the ways we are taking care of our troops.

In regards to the actions of the last several years, the General noted that more than 14,000 of our personnel have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, peacekeeping duties in the Balkans and Sinai Peninsula, and domestic support missions in Iowa. It has now been more than 8 years since the attacks of September 11th, and as it stands today more than half of our force are combat or deployment veterans.

The recent contributions of the Iowa National Guard has resulted in a force that is "among the most seasoned and experienced military professionals our state has ever fielded, in our more than 170 year history," according to General Orr. Even so, we currently have the lowest number of personnel deployed since the war on terrorism began.

General Orr recognized the strain that has been put on the Guard in recent years but provided optimism in that they are transitioning from a Strategic Reserve to an Operational Reserve which will enable sustained readiness and make deployments more predictable. In fact, General Orr said the Guard is closer to what he called a total force today than at any time in his 31 years of service.

Despite being at war for 8 years, the Iowa National Guard has been at 100% strength for 9 straight years now. General Orr proudly pointed to the fact that the Guard's retention rates exceeds national goals and remains among the highest in the nation.

Looking forward, General Orr highlighted what he calls the Iowa National Guard Campaign Plan whose goal is the development of a future Iowa National Guard that is capable of responding to a variety of military and domestic operations.

The final priority highlighted by General Orr covered the efforts of caring for Soldiers, Airmen, Families and Employers. The Survivor Outreach Support program assists the families of fallen soldiers through education, support groups, and counseling. A coordinator was recently hired by the program and will help ensure these families get the help they need and remain a part of the military family.

The Guard also continues to work on the mental health needs of both soldiers and families. New programs to increase the resilience of soldiers and family are being employed and the number of Family Assistance Specialists has increased from 4 to 7. These specialists check in on families during a deployment and help them connect with military, community and veteran resources.

Finally, General Orr thanked the people of Iowa for the continued support for the men and women in uniform and their families. As the Guard faces challenges, it is clear the support of fellow Iowans is appreciated by soldiers and their families.

What do you think? Email me your thoughts. My e-mail address is : cecil.dolecheck@legis.state.ia.us

House Visitors include : Axel Larson, Stacy Perkins, and Chad Means of Montgomery County Farm Bureau, Louis Els of Taylor County Farm Bureau, Barb Fuller of the Corning Ag Extension and Family Services, and Lara West nursing student from Corning attending Grand View University.

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

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