



For Immediate Release

Capitol Comments

Rep. Mike May

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Sausage Making and Making Ends Meet

There is considerable disagreement over the origin of the phrase, "making ends meet," but the general consensus lays it on an impoverished sausage maker.

Due to the high cost of meat, he had to start using vegetable protein fillers in half his product because he was having a difficult time "making ends meet".

Making both columns of your balance sheet meet (income and expenses) is the highest function of government. The Iowa House has been putting out considerable sausage over the past several weeks and the legislative version doesn't taste very good.

Why? Well in order to make ends meet we have used every filler we could find. On March 19 the majority party finally released a balance sheet showing all of the spending that has been approved to this point (and that anticipated). The numbers, as you and I expected, paint a bleak picture.

According to the non-partisan Fiscal Services Division (FSD) of the Legislative Services Agency, the built-in spending increases approved so far exceed \$1 billion for FY 2012. The analogy suggests that next year we will not have enough sausage to make ends meet. Worse, we'll even be without filler.

One-Time Money

FSD suggests we are using one-time money sources from the state cash reserve fund and from federal stimulus money. It says we are not funding our portion of our schools' allowable growth, and are forcing local property taxpayers to pick up the check. We are allowing a surtax to fund the instructional support levy for schools for one year....and on and on. In spite of claims of fiscal discipline, the majority party will approve the second largest budget in Iowa history and pay for \$800 million of it with one time money.

Since these budget bills will spend considerably more money than the state takes in, and raise property taxes, I have not and will not support any of these appropriations.

Education Gap Grows

Considerable attention was focused early in the session on changing Iowa law to permit the state to be competitive for federal grants designed to help turn around failing schools. However the House and Senate have combined to make prospects bleak.

Instead of following federal guidelines (supported by Iowa's urban legislators) of establishing a good charter school law, supporting the use of performance based pay, flexibility in school hours, days, and building assignments, the majority party chose to make change in these failing schools even more difficult.

This is disappointing because it is unlikely that Iowa will receive a federal grant to help failing schools and, more importantly, it means that we have not developed a plan for dealing with the growing numbers of underperforming schools.

As if to underscore my point, the Des Moines Register last week reported results of the only nationwide test that fairly compares the performance of Iowa children with students across the nation. The 2009 NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) scores show that Iowa's eighth graders score fell while the national averages jumped.

Average fourth-grade scores also fell, and we should be embarrassed that Iowa was one of only four states that showed a decline at that level. Iowa was No. 27 in fourth grade reading and No. 28 for eighth grade readers.

The results of these most recent NAEP tests should pull back the curtain that is hiding the serious erosion of Iowa's elite educational status among the states. These numbers are startling and should give all readers pause.

Final Verdict on Texting and Driving

A joint Senate and House Conference Committee met last week and developed the final version of the Texting Bill. Minors with special permits will not be able to use electronic devices while driving.

The prohibition is much narrower for adult drivers. Adults cannot use a hand-held electronic communication device to read, write, or send a text message while driving a motor vehicle. A violation of the prohibition is only enforceable as a secondary offense. That means that an officer cannot stop someone just for texting. The citation must be accompanied by a stop for some other traffic violation.

The fines are fairly modest unless someone is injured or killed when violating this new law. Warnings will be issued for one year beginning this July 1. After this warning and education period, citations will be issued.

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