



# Iowa House of Representatives

## Dawn Pettengill

### State Representative

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## APPROPRIATIONS: Built-In Spending



On Friday, March 19, we finally received a balance sheet showing all of the spending that will be approved during the 2011 session. The numbers paint a bleak picture – according to the non-partisan Fiscal Services Division the built-in spending approved so far is \$1.014 billion for FY 2012.

### **Breakdown of Built-in Spending for FY 2012:**

- \$303.3 million to replace Cash Reserve Fund money for Medicaid plus growth
- \$243.7 million to replace one-time federal stimulus funds for Medicaid
- \$170.1 million to fully fund 2 percent allowable growth for K-12 education
- \$109.8 million to replace one-time funds for the property tax credits
- \$50 million to replace funding for Value Fund with general fund dollars
- \$47.9 million to replace one-time stimulus funds used for K-12 education
- \$44.5 million to replace other one-time funds in Health and Human Services
- \$27.3 million to replace funding for CAT, Technology Reinvestment Fund, college student aid
- \$18 million to fully fund instructional support, non-public transportation, at-risk programs

As your financial watch-dog, I try to be as careful with your tax dollars as I am with my own. I have voted against all budget bills we have taken up this year and will continue to oppose them as they'll spend more than the state takes in and ultimately raise property taxes.

## EDUCATION: Achievement Slips

Iowa's 2009 student achievement scores fell from their 2007 level, according to the National Assessment for Education Progress (NAEP) - the only test taken in all fifty states. The 2009 NAEP results show that Iowa's reading scores continue to lag. Fourth graders in 28 states meet or beat Iowa's fourth graders in reading, while eighth graders in thirty states beat Iowa's eighth graders.

## House District 39 News

*Here we are, with Adjournment Sine Die upon us. It is a bittersweet, as this is my final session for now. Dawn & I have been through a lot during our three legislative sessions together. We have had happy times, sad times and lots of times where I saw the importance of doing what's right even when it's not popular. I have been truly blessed to work in the Iowa House and meet amazing people from every corner of our great state.*

*With mixed feelings, I'm moving on. After temporary work here and in our parks, I've begun to study for my Masters of Arts in Teaching at Simpson College, with plans to apply what I've learned as a Social Studies Teacher. It is foreboding to hear Rep. Christopher Rants keep reminding us that 2,500 teachers are being "pink-slipped." I remember that I've got the tools to be a great educator, and look forward to using them to turn lightbulbs on in students and shape Iowa's next generation.*

*As I'll be Student Teaching during the next legislative session, I'm sure Dawn is accepting applications for a new clerk. Good handwriting, pleasant disposition, style and attention to detail are necessary. My successor must make me proud!*

*-Jess Rundlett*

## NATURAL RESOURCES: Shade Tree Programs

This week, the Iowa DNR announced a program to allow MidAmerican Energy customers in Iowa to reduce future energy use and landscape their homes. The Plant Some Shade® residential tree-planting program is a partnership initiative to aid long-term energy and natural resources conservation. The program is funded by MidAmerican and administered by DNR's Bureau of Forestry. The bureau has eight local partners, including the Cities of Cedar Rapids and Waterloo and the County Conservation Boards of Carroll, Polk, Pottawattamie, Scott, Warren and Webster Counties.

Plant Some Shade®, enables MidAmerican's residential customers to purchase up to two, 3 to 8-foot landscaping trees for only \$30 each. Each project has a variety of trees available. Spring projects will take place around the state, including in Cedar Rapids and Waterloo. Advanced orders for Plant Some Shade® are required. Order forms can be obtained at:

[www.midamericanenergy.com/ee/ia\\_res\\_shade.aspx](http://www.midamericanenergy.com/ee/ia_res_shade.aspx).

Orders will be accepted until all trees have been sold. With locations close to home, take advantage of this program, plant a tree and make sure we keep District #39 the most beautiful place in Iowa for years to come!



## VETERANS AFFAIRS: FY11 Budget

The Health and Human Services Appropriation Bill (HF 2526) passed the House last week. It contains the funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) and the Iowa Veterans Home (IVH).

### Department of Veterans Affairs

This year's appropriations bill, for FY11, keeps the same level for the DVA as it had last year after the Governor's Across the Board Cut. The DVA will get \$960,453. It also keeps the same level for appropriations to the War Orphans fund, at \$12,731. It funds \$90,000 less to the County Grant fund at \$900,000. It also refills the \$128,145 hole that the ATB cut put in the Injured Veterans Grant Fund.

The County Grant fund appropriates \$10,000 to each of Iowa's 99 counties. At \$900,000 appropriated for FY11, it is \$90,000 short. The bill fills this hole by appropriating \$90,000 from the Merchant Marine Fund, under the DVA. This leaves roughly \$46,000 in the Merchant Marine Fund.

### Iowa Veterans Home

The FY11 appropriation maintains their FY10 ending level, by appropriating \$9,630,846. From the carry-forward, the IVH is required to transfer \$1,000,000 of the FY10 funds to the DHS for field operations for FY11.

The state appropriated money makes up roughly 11% of the IVH's overall budget, which is over \$70 million. The remaining bulk of that comes from the federal government and Medicaid.

## AGRICULTURE: Money Diverted to Fund Midwest Grape Wine Industry Institute

The Senate passed House File 2525 on a party-line 30-17 vote. Among the changes that the Senate made was a reallocation of \$238,000 of the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship's (IDALS) general fund appropriation to Iowa State University for the Midwest Grape and Wine Industry Institute. If this provision is retained and enacted, it will likely result in the laying off of an additional 5-10 soil and water conservation district secretaries or technicians across the state.

### Other changes made by the Senate include:

- (1) striking provisions which provides that future use of REAP funds is not to be used to pay Honey Creek bond obligations.
- (2) including language that next year's budget for this subcommittee will include within line-items for fish and game trust funds.
- (3) inserting language that directs the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture to prepare a local food and farm plan containing policy and funding recommendations for supporting and expanding local food systems and for assessing and overcoming obstacles necessary to increase locally grown food production.
- (4) adding new qualifying language to allow IDALS to use Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program appropriations to be used as cost-share match for USDA-NRCS wetlands reserve program funding available to Iowa.
- (5) attaching new, never discussed, 4-year appropriation of \$200,000 from the Solid Waste Account (SWAP) of the Groundwater Protection Fund to be used for illegal dumping and litter prevention and education.
- (6) and appending a corrective fix to establish a fund in IDALS to receive fees collected pursuant to the "puppy mill" legislation.

## TRANSPORTATION: Texting Prohibition Adopted

The long awaited texting bill has met its fate. A conference committee, including Senator Kapucian, met last week to strike a compromise on the House and Senate versions of the bill.

The first section of House File 2456 cover minors. Minors who have special permits are prohibited from using electronic communication devices or electronic entertainment devices unless their vehicle is at a complete stop off the traveled portion of the highway. This means that minors with special permits cannot talk on their cell phones while driving.

The prohibition in House File 2456 is much narrower for adult drivers. Adults cannot use a handheld communication device to read, write or send a text message while driving a vehicle, unless that vehicle is at a complete stop off the roadway. A handheld electronic communication device includes a mobile telephone or other portable electronic communication device capable of text messaging. It is still permissible to use a global positioning or navigational system, to manually enter a telephone number to place a call, or to talk on your cell phone while driving. Officers cannot confiscate phones during stops.

Due to concerns brought forth by the commercial truck driving industry, emergency workers, and other public safety officials – several exemptions were inserted in the conference committee report with regard to the reading prohibition.

The enforcement of the new adult texting prohibition has changed significantly from the versions previously passed by both chambers. A violation of the prohibition is now only enforceable as a secondary offense. This means that a police officer cannot stop someone just for texting – the citation must be accompanied by a stop for some other traffic violation. A person in violation is guilty of a non-moving violation, a simple misdemeanor and will be punished by a scheduled fine of \$30, with harsher penalties if someone dies as a result of the violation.

For both adults and minors only warnings will be issued between July 1, 2010 and June 30, 2011. After that period, citations can be issued.

## COMMERCE: Health Care Reform Starts Federal Tanning Tax

It didn't take long for President Obama to sign the Senate's version of health care reform into law. And it won't take long for him to continue breaking campaign promises.

With Tuesday's signing of the bill, provisions are beginning to go into effect. The first change some Americans will notice is a new tax. Beginning Wednesday, March 24, 2010, those who choose to utilize indoor tanning salons will pay an additional ten percent tax on this service. Apparently, the President's promise not to raise taxes on Americans making less than \$200,000 does not apply to students getting ready for prom or spring break.

At least the sun is still free.

