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

ASSISTANT MINORITY LEADER

COMMITTEES
Administration and Rules
Appropriations
Local Government
State Government
Transportation

News Release
January 14, 2010

The 2010 session of the 83rd General Assembly “gaveled in” this past Monday, January 11th. This year’s session is unique in that session days have been shortened from 100 to 80. The scheduled adjournment date is March 31st. The first week of session always contains a great deal of ceremony. Opening day speeches by legislative leaders are then followed by formal addresses by the Governor on Tuesday and the Chief Justice on Wednesday. Within a week or two the Adjutant General will deliver the state of the Nation Guard address.

Standing committees began meeting this week. I serve on the Appropriations, Local Government, State Government and Transportation standing committees. Additionally I serve on the Administration and Rules committee and the International Relations committee.

The most significant challenge before this year’s legislature is putting a budget together for next year. The Governor has delayed the release of his budget until the end of January. The formal budgetary process typically begins when the Governor presents his budget to the legislature. With a shortened session and a serious spending gap of over one billion dollars, the delay in releasing his budget proposal will make this work even more difficult. After passing record general fund spending a year ago there will need to be serious “belt tightening” this year. The word “no” will have to be said over and over again to the request for more money. Cost savings will have to be implemented. House Republicans recommended a list of significant cost saving measures last year and those measures will be revisited. There is a new willingness on the part of Majority Democrats to consider these proposals as they finally recognize the severity of the state’s budget challenge. I have always been mindful of being a good steward of the taxpayers’ money. As individuals and businesses have discovered, the current economic situation is forcing everyone to readjust spending habits. State government should do the same.

This is a moment in time when fiscal discipline needs to be applied to the state budget. Strict adherence to the 99% spending limitation law would go a long way in helping to build a responsible, sound budget for next year. I am also hopeful that the steep downward trend in revenue may be leveling out. If we can stabilize the revenue side of the state’s budget it will go a long way in helping to build a more realistic and predictable budget for FY2011.

You can email me at my legislative address at rod.roberts@legis.state.ia.us. Or call me at (515) 281-3221.