

Sweeney from the State House
2-4-2010

Session has been very busy since we started and new developments take place every minuet. One of the highlights of the week was a passing of my bill about Veteran Home Loans inspired by Heath Stolee from Radcliffe. It passed the House by 100 votes...how exciting!! Here is a general overview of some of the happenings of the week.

General Fund Revenue near the REC Estimate for FY 2010

On Monday, February 1, Fiscal Services Division released its monthly revenue memo reviewing actual general fund revenue through the first seven months of the fiscal year. Please keep in mind the Fiscal Services Division is a non partisan division.

Through January 31, general fund revenue was down 7.5 percent, or \$257 million, compared to the first seven months of last fiscal year. The REC estimate for FY 2010 is - 8.5 percent or \$490 million less than FY 2009 so actual revenue is just above the seemingly conservative estimate.

Personal income tax receipts in January were down 13.6 percent compared to January 2009. Some of that is due to a timing issue which inflated December 2009 income tax receipts. The REC estimate for personal income tax revenue is -3.6 percent compared to FY 2009. Through the first seven months of FY 2010, personal income taxes are down 3.9 percent compared to FY 2009.

In January, sales tax receipts were down 8.3 percent compared to January, 2009. However, due to strong sales tax receipts in the first half of the year, sales tax is down only 2.5 percent for the year, compared to the REC estimate of -5.3 percent. Corporate income tax receipts were down a whopping 50.7 percent compared to January, 2009. Despite this large decrease, overall corporate income tax revenue is down 18.3 percent, compared to the REC estimate of -18.1 percent. Still, since corporate income tax is based on corporate profits, it is not a good sign for the economy that corporate taxes were down over 50 percent for the month. In addition, insurance premium tax revenue and bank franchise tax revenue were both down significantly.

The revenue memo proves that the state's economy is not of the woods yet and that the focus needs to remain on cutting the state's budget and creating private sector jobs.

DNR Extends Comment Period for Animal Feeding Operations Rules

On Thursday, January 27, 2010, as part of its weekly newsletter *EcoNewsWire*, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) notified the public that DNR is extending by two weeks the deadline to submit public comments on a proposed rule that affects livestock and poultry operations in the state. The proposed rules incorporate new legislation that limits winter land application of liquid manure if it comes from a totally roofed confinement, sets requirements for stockpiling, and clarifies existing laws and rules. **The new deadline will be February 15th.**

Two public hearings remain. People are invited to make oral comments at either meeting or submit written comments.

- Jan. 29 (rescheduled from Jan. 20) at 1:30 p.m. in the Marr Park Conservation Center, 2943 Highway 92, Ainsworth; and
- Feb. 1 at 1:30 p.m. in the North Iowa Area Community College Muse Norris Conference Center, 500 College Drive, Mason City.

Additionally, written comments can be submitted no later than 4 p.m., Feb. 15 to Gene Tinker, DNR, 502 E. Ninth St, Des Moines, IA 50319, or faxed to (515) 281-8895 or e-mailed to gene.tinker@dnr.iowa.gov. Both the proposed rules and the 2009 legislation can be found on the DNR animal feeding operations Web site at www.iowadnr.gov/afo/newrules.html.

Regents Propose 6 Percent Tuition Increase

This week the Iowa Board of Regents is set to raise tuition for next school year by six percent. This amounts to a \$346 tuition increase for every in-state undergraduate student. In-state students will pay \$5,782 at the University of Iowa and \$5,756 at Iowa State and the University of Northern Iowa.

Out-of-state undergraduates will see an increase of \$1,268 (6%) per student at the University of Iowa, \$692 (4.1 %) per student at Iowa State University and \$422 (3 %) at the University of Northern Iowa.

The Regents acknowledge that the Higher Education Price Index will only increase 2.7 percent but claim that the \$162 million in reduction in state aid this year justifies the six percent increase.

These tuition increases will net the Regents \$33.6 million in new revenue next year.

Student fees are another matter. At the University of Iowa student fees will jump from \$219 from \$1,042 to \$1,289 in order to fund the new Campus Recreation and Wellness Center. Student fees at the other two universities will remain stable with Iowa State student fees at \$894 and fees at the University of Northern Iowa at \$906. At Iowa State there were a number of students that lobby against the new fees for the new rec center.

I have had a number of calls concerning Empowerment. This letter when going out to my email blast will let the readers know there is an open public hearing on the matter and of the Reorganization bill Monday, February 8th in the Supreme Court Room in the Capitol. Please come. If you would like to speak at the hearing please call the Legislative Information Office 515-281-5129.

Dismantle Right to Work – Fair Share Fees

Right-to-Work laws guarantee that no person can be compelled, as a condition of employment, to join or not to join, nor to pay dues to a labor union. In 1947, the Taft-Hartley amendments to the 1935 National Labor Relations Act affirmed states' right to pass Right-to-Work laws. Iowa has been a Right-to-Work state since 1947, just after the Taft-Hartley amendments were enacted.

Allowing unions to collect fees or dues from a non-member flies in the face of Iowa's Right to Work law. Iowa Code Section 731.4 specifically states "It shall be unlawful for any person, firm, association, labor organization or corporation, or political subdivision, either directly or indirectly, or in any manner or by any means as a prerequisite to or a condition of employment to require any person to pay dues, charges, fees, contributions, fines or assessments to any labor union, labor association or labor organization."

House Study Bill 702, which was introduced on February 4, would repeal the Right to Work provisions afforded to Iowa's public employees and a force fair share fee upon non-union employees of the Executive Branch, including Regents. The "fair share fee" would be the amount charged to an employee (covered by a bargaining unit) who is not a member of a union to cover the costs incurred (by the union). HSB 702 requires that negotiations include whether a fair share fee shall be charged to nonmembers of the union. I am very disappointed in the bringing of House Study Bill 702. I thought the peoples voice was heard loud and clear last year. Iowans want the Right to Work for whom and with whom they want and any "fees" connected with it.

We have our work cut out for us and a very busy session left. Interestingly, the session only 80 days, is rushing important decisions and not letting us converse with our constituents. I so appreciate the phone calls and emails and others letting me call them late at night to get opinions on legislation.

Visitors this week were great and a lot of fun (I love visitors!). The ambassadors from Iowa State University, Block and Bridal Club, Alice Draper from Eldora, Jake Rudy from Radcliffe.