

In review of the budget that was released this week...it spends more than what we take in. Here is what is happening..... In addition to general fund appropriations of \$5.32 billion, the budget uses \$387 million in one-time money to increase spending:

- \$207.5 million from the Cash Reserve Fund
- \$37.7 million from the Senior Living Trust Fund for Medicaid
- \$48 million in stimulus money for education and general purpose
- \$94.2 million in stimulus for Medicaid expenditures

It appears that the budget will raise taxes. The real question is does it fund the 2 percent allowable growth for K-12 education at \$333 million. This is \$233 million from the general fund and \$100 million from the Cash Reserve Fund. LSA (the LSA is a non-partisan agency) estimates that 2 percent will cost \$514 million in FY 2011. Therefore, it underfunds the 2 percent by \$170 million. Since the spending authority remains, the \$170 million can be made up with in property tax increases. It also proposes other property tax increases by funding the property tax credits below last year's level and funding the State Patrol out of the Road Use Tax Fund. Both will increase property taxes. I am very dismayed with the funding of the Patrol from the Road Use Tax.

On Monday, the Iowa House passed unanimously [HF 2075](#). This bill will require insurers to pay the routine cost of cancer medical treatment (blood work, doctors' charges, hospital charges, and diagnostic tests) while receiving experimental drugs associated with clinical trials. Most insurers at this time pay for clinical trials. The bill does not force the insurer to pay for the drug treatment, but for the care that is associated with it. This will save the cancer patient from out-of-pocket expense to participate in a clinical trial.

The Veterans Affairs committee brought a bill to the floor late Tuesday, producing partisan debate that veterans bills typically don't see. After a contentious hour of debate, the bill passed the House by a vote of 55 to 44.

The language of the bill itself simply adds a paragraph to the Iowa Code section that provides exemptions to those ineligible for unemployment benefits for voluntarily quitting their job. This new paragraph says that if an individual quits their job voluntarily because of the relocation of the individual's spouse by the military, they are eligible to receive unemployment benefits.

No one argued that the intent of the bill isn't a noble one. There are military families who face hardships when deployments occur, and Republicans recognize that. But the bill doesn't work to address specifically the legitimate situations in which it would make sense. It's written poorly, with little focus, and a very wide scope.

The bottom line is that the popular name of the bill, the "trailing spouse" bill is simply a misnomer. There is nothing in the bill requiring that the spouse accompany the military member. There is no language in the bill requiring the spouse to move at all. There is no language in the bill limiting what type of relocation is eligible. The unemployment

eligibility is triggered simply by the relocation of the military member by the military to anywhere, for any reason.

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Rumors that Community Empowerment would be dismantled came true this week. Senate File 2088 strikes Community Empowerment from Iowa law.

In its place is "Early Childhood Iowa" board under the Iowa Department of Education. When Community Empowerment was created, the state board was intentionally placed in the Governor's Department of Management. No one agency or early childhood partner was favored over the other.

Senate File 2088 changes all that and more. The bill makes the Department of Education the lead agency for the "comprehensive early care, education, health and human services system." The short and long term ramifications of the lead agency status are unknown. As of July 1, 2010 the local community empowerment boards are dissolved and ALL of their unexpended funds are returned to the Department of Education. The funds shall be "redisseminated" to the new Early Childhood Iowa areas.

On Thursday, January 21, 2010, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) released its weekly EcoNewsWire newsletter which contained an article reminding confinement site manure applicators to meet their annual training requirements. At many county Iowa State University Extension offices.

The deadline for expiring certificates is March 1. To avoid late fees, applicators whose certificates are expiring must complete the two hour training, and submit forms and fees to the DNR before that date. A \$25 continuing education fee is charged. Prior said even those who completed certification this fall must complete training in 2010. They should pre-register for the training sessions with the Extension office to ensure seating and adequate training materials. Applicators can find contacts for registration and a list of counties where the training is available at [www.agronext.iastate.edu/immag/certification/10macprogrampostcard.pdf](http://www.agronext.iastate.edu/immag/certification/10macprogrampostcard.pdf).

Those applicators who cannot attend a training session should contact their local Extension office to schedule time to watch the videotape. Applicators are urged to attend because videotapes will not be available until mid-February. Applicators who cannot schedule a training session can take a 50 question exam. More information about the manure applicators certification program is available at [www.iowadnr.gov/afo/appcert.html](http://www.iowadnr.gov/afo/appcert.html) or <http://extension.agron.iastate>.

Our hero, Auditor Vaudt, said item for funding the State Patrol inaccurately called savings in the consultant's report is the proposal to 'support operations of the Iowa State Patrol with the Road Use Tax Fund.'

"Currently, the operations of the State Patrol are paid for from the General Fund. This proposal to instead fund the State Patrol from the Road Use Tax Fund does not produce any savings for Iowa taxpayers. Taking costs from one pot of taxpayers' money and moving those costs to another pot of taxpayers' money does not reduce spending. In this case, every dollar that is scooped from the Road Use Tax Fund to support the Iowa State Patrol operations decreases the resources available to construct and maintain Iowa's roads—a primary purpose of the Road Use Tax Fund. In talking with our supervisor in Hardin County, Jim Johnson, it will cost our county \$160,000 in road use money. I want our Troupers to be funded and for all of us to be safe! In a 6 billion dollar budget the amount of 50 million dollars for our Troupers, just 1% of the budget, is looking like it is not a priority, it should be!

This week was really busy and good. The students from Iowa Valley Community College came to visit. I was fortunate to be on a legislator panel for discussion of concerns. The group came up with excellent questions. Karlton Krause from Iowa Falls visited and addressed the Ag Committee on some innovative ideas. Madison Henderson, an Angus friend from Drakesville, came with the Community Colleges and we got to catch up. I will be with the Governor on Friday at West Marshall School then to Iowa Valley in Marshalltown for a forum with Economic Directors and how the Community Colleges aid in preparing people for the workforce. On Saturday I am traveling to Atlantic to talk with the group Iowa Women in Agriculture. It is a great group that educates and empowers women that are involved with Ag. Thank you for all your calls and emails and keep them coming...staying connected is what it's all about.