

Sweeney from the Statehouse 3-12-2010

What an interesting week at the Statehouse. We are still very busy and trying to adjourn according to expectations set at the beginning of the session.

A battle is brewing in the Capitol between teachers' unions and administrators. Background on the issue: In 2007, upon the Governor's recommendation, the state legislature passed legislation that helped raise teacher compensation from 37<sup>th</sup> in the union to the present ranking of 26<sup>th</sup>. To do this, the state had agreed to pay \$5,000 of the total salary for teachers in Iowa's 361 districts and area education agencies. This is known as Teacher Quality money. The state funding is approximately \$251 million. The average teacher salary in Iowa is \$48,638. In October of 2009, the Governor announced an across-the-board cut (ATB) of 10%. This would result in a \$500 reduction in teacher compensation. In December, the Iowa Department of Education issued a declaratory ruling saying that districts didn't have to pay the ATB. Many districts followed the ruling and passed along the 10% ATB to their teachers.

On Monday, the Education Appropriations subcommittee passed [SSB 3248](#). This bill has a collective bargaining provision that would do the following:

- Teacher Quality money is not subject to an ATB - retroactive to this fiscal year and applicable to any future ATB. Districts that didn't pay the 10% ATB in FY10 will now have to do so (statewide this total is \$24 million);
- Community college salary money is not subject to an ATB - retroactive to this fiscal year and applicable to any future ATB;
- A new procedure for K-12 negotiations is that districts shall negotiate Teacher Quality and regular salary money as one combined salary, retroactive to July 1, 2009; and
- K-12 teachers immediately get the name of any person who filed a complaint against them. Thirty-two other licensing boards don't give out the name of the person unless or until it is a founded complaint. Also, the teacher immediately gets "all other supporting documentation" regarding the complaint.

Now, with FY10 almost over, some school districts will have to come up with the money to fund the \$24 million. This is an example of an unfunded mandate and if this bill passes in its present form, property taxes will have to be increased to come up with the money. Unfunded mandates, they have put the tax payer into a bad position.

On Tuesday Mark Day, and Ralph Allbee from Eldora Training School for Boys and Peg DeArmond and Doug Hansen from New Providence Quakerdale came to showcase some of their programs and to tell other legislators of how important their roles are to our youth and community. It was a great success and the Department of Health and Human Services allocated in their budget more funds to help with some of the budget cuts. Great job everyone!

On Wednesday, March 3, 2010, the House Agriculture Committee passed House File 2512 unanimously. The bill is sponsored House Majority Leader McCarthy and House

Minority Leader Paulsen and is similar to a measure that passed the House Agriculture Committee earlier in the session (House File 2419).

HF 2512 expands existing Code authority that allows trucks moving livestock and construction materials with six axles to weigh up to a range from 80,500 pounds to 90,000 pounds; and up to 96,000 pounds for seven axles to apply to all commercial vehicles of similar size. The measure requires that a commercial motor vehicle traveling under the relaxed weight restrictions must be operated by a person with a commercial driver's license valid for the vehicle operated, unless the operator is exempt from commercial driver licensing requirements under existing law. The provisions of the bill do not apply to vehicles operated on interstate highways.

The instigation for this legislation is two-fold. First, it would allow for greater hauling efficiency and energy efficiency since trucks operated by one-driver could haul almost 25% more per load for a fuel use increase of about 10%. Second, with more axels, the weight placed through the wheels onto a roadway surface would be significantly less and this could reduce weight damage to roads.

Also on Wednesday HF 2357 came to the floor and passed. I voted against it due to my concerns that it infringes upon second amendment rights without being convicted of a crime.

The "Ed Thomas" bill was passed unanimously in the House on Thursday. My hat is off to Representative Pat Grassley who started working on this bill last summer with the family. The Senate had a similar bill but it was not what the family had wanted and when it came over to the House, Representative Mertz and Olson worked with Grassley to perfect the bill to its original intent. This bill is an act to relating to the emergency hospitalization of a person with a serious mental impairment and notification to officials when that person is released.

I was honored when I visited with the CEO of the Girl Scouts of Great Iowa when she asked if I would attend some of their forums on reducing relational aggression and empowering individuals against abuse and speaking to the groups. I encourage all to go to [www.girlscoutsiowa.org](http://www.girlscoutsiowa.org) to find out more about these forums. Also available at [www.AWayThrough.com](http://www.AWayThrough.com) is a free copy of the audio course.

A great group of visitors came by this week to chat about issues and express their concerns to me. Ben Walk of St. Ansgar job shadowed for a day; Tanner Randall, Johnquavius Jones, Joel Herrarte, Asher Herren, Dominick Casconi, Mark Day, Ralph Allbee, Eldora Training School; Peg DeArmond and Doug Hansen of Quakerdale New Providence; Ed Drake, Radcliffe; Deb Crosser, Eldora; and Mike Stensland, Iowa Falls.