



Iowa House of Representatives Statehouse News

October 31, 2007

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For additional information, check our web site at: www.iowahouse.org

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First Tribute to Veterans Career Fair

There are 500 sponsors and 70 companies that will participate at the first annual *Tribute to Veterans Career Fair* on November 8th. The event is organized by Iowa Workforce Development, and will go from 9:00 am until 3:00 pm at the Iowa Event Center's Hy-Vee Hall in Des Moines.



The career fair will include special provider booths for military service persons including benefits, resume reviews and interview tips. Although targeted towards veterans, any interested job seeker is welcome to attend and talk with potential employers.

The opening ceremony includes a presentation of colors by the championship color guard of the American Legion, a U.S. Ma-

rine Corps wreath presentation, and the Madrid High School Choral ensemble will sing the "Star Spangled Banner."

Governor Culver will address the opening ceremony audience that will include distinguished military leaders. In addition, the Iowa Hall of Pride will offer \$1 admission for the day for all attendees.

Most of the Workforce Development offices statewide offer, and organize, job fairs throughout the year to all job seekers. This is the first one that will be targeted towards veterans to help them transition and find a job. Employers that assist with the job fairs see it as an excellent opportunity to address Iowa's expected future job surplus.

County Grant Program for Veterans

In 2006, the Legislature approved \$1 million to establish a county grant program to help counties improve services to veterans. Counties were eligible for grants up to \$10,000, but they had to provide dollar-for-dollar match to receive the grants.

In the first year, 67 counties participated and \$578,096 was awarded by the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs. The program was hampered by a delay in the development of administrative rules, which resulted in a compressed time schedule for counties to apply for the grants. The department considers this level of participation a success considering the compressed schedule.

The Legislature approved \$750,000 for the County Grant Program for Veterans this year. The department does not anticipate the problems they had in the first year.

Some of the problems the department had last year included the requirement for matching dollars; the mistaken belief by some counties the grant was a reimbursement; some counties were unaware their veterans commission needed to have their budget amended to increase their spending authority to account for the grant; and some grants were awarded late in the fiscal year so they needed to roll over the funds for use in the next fiscal year.

Regents Universities and Credit Cards

The University of Iowa, Iowa State University, University of Northern Iowa and their alumni associations have all made headlines in recent weeks concerning their agreements with Bank of America for university sponsored credit cards. The University of Iowa and Iowa State target their cards to students, while the University of Northern Iowa banned such practices five months ago.

Between the three regent institutions, there are a total of 75,309 cardholders including 561 held by current students.

The average balance on student-held cards is roughly \$1,100.

Since this issue has come to light, the three regent's institutions have released their contracts with Bank of America and came before the Joint Legislative Government Oversight Committee on October 30th to answer questions of concerned Legislators. With mounting debt, privacy concerns, and a barrage of other credit card requests, the Legislators want to insure students' interests are being put first.

Attorney General Tom Miller has taken a strong stance on the

aggressive marketing of credit cards to college students. Many students are inexperienced in handling finances and many credit card offers can be confusing. College students make easy targets for credit card companies.

Legislators have voiced their concerns with the aggressive practices of credit card companies. With the average student debt in Iowa at \$23,000, students are digging a hole some may never get out of.

The universities told the Oversight Committee they will target fans instead of students. The universities want to make the best interest of students their priority.



Health Commission Works on Recommendations

The Legislative Commission on Affordable Health Care Plans for Small Businesses and Families is working toward making recommendations to the Iowa Legislature. The Commission met last month in Sioux City and will meet on November 14th in Dubuque.

Based on the eight guiding principles that were adopted at the August meeting in Mason City, the Commission divided up into seven concept groups. The concepts identified by the Commission for further discussion are:

- Workforce Shortages
- Electronic Medical Records

- Medical Home
- Coverage
- Purchasing Pools for Medications
- Patient Rights
- Funding – Cost Containment

Each group was asked to identify:

1. The questions that need to be asked.
2. What additional resources need to be collected?
3. How the concepts could be applied to Iowa?

4. The specific recommendations they have for inclusion in the commission's legislative package.

Many of the groups are continuing to meet between Commission meetings to work on the recommendations that will be presented to the full Commission for final approval.

To learn more about what the Commission is discussing you may go to the Commission's website at <http://www.legis.state.ia.us/asp/Commitees/Committee.aspx?id=208>. The last meeting of the Affordable Health Care Commission will be in Des Moines on December 19th.

Battle Flags to be Rotated at the Capitol

The State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI) will rotate battle flags at the State Capitol Building next week, returning the 10th Iowa Infantry Regimental Flag to storage and putting the 9th Iowa Infantry, National, on display. The event

will be at 10 a.m. Tuesday, November 7 in the Capitol rotunda. The public is invited.

For preservation concerns, the 10th Iowa Infantry Regimental Flag will be stored in the State Historical

Building's Battle Flag laboratory and will not be available for public viewing for the next three to four years. The 10th Iowa Infantry was the first regimental flag to go on display at the Capitol after receiving full conservation treatment.

Many of the 260 battle flags in SHSI's collection carry bullet holes and the blood of the soldiers who fought under them. Several of the flags were in extremely poor physical condition when SHSI took possession of them. Conservators rotate the flags into exhibits as they are conserved and properly prepared for public display.

The 9th Iowa, also known as the "Elson Flag," underwent 16 months of conservation treatment. The flag was given to the 9th Iowa Infantry from the Ladies of Boston on July 10, 1862 as a "token of our grateful admiration for the valor and heroism displayed by you on the memorable field of Pea Ridge."

The "Elson Flag" is also a Medal of Honor flag for Sgt. James

Elson. He was awarded the Medal of Honor in recognition of his gallant stand on the edge of Vicksburg. Sgt. Elson's descendent, John Elson of Iowa City, has been invited to attend the rotation, when it will be seen by the public for the first time since the 1890s.

The "Elson Flag" will be on display at the Capitol Building through Dec. 30, 2007.

TIME 21 Committee Meets to Discuss Road Funding

The TIME 21 interim committee held their first meeting on October 17 and had a full day of presentations and discussion. TIME 21 stands for *Transportation Investment Moves the Economy in the Twenty-First Century*. The committee is charged with addressing the revenue needs of the TIME 21 fund that was established in House File 932 during the 2007 session.

Time 21 Fund

Last session, the Legislature created a TIME 21 fund in House File 932, although no appropriation was made for this particular fund. The bill stated that if the legislature appropriated any money to the fund it is to be used on state, county and city roads in the following manner:

State Roads – 60% of the money for projects will go to state roads, with priority given to completion of projects designed as Access Iowa Highways, projects on the interstates, and projects on the commercial and industrial network that are in the department's five-year program with emphasis on areas that have existing biodiesel, ethanol, or other biorefinery plants.

County Roads – 20% of the money is to be deposited into the secondary road fund and distributed according to the current distribution formula (based upon total miles, population, number of bridges,

paved and gravel roads) for counties. At least 10% of the counties' portion must be used for bridge repair, construction and maintenance. Priority is to be given to projects that aid and support economic development and job creation.

City Roads – 20% of the money is to be deposited into the city street fund and distributed to cities based upon population.

Presenters

Nancy Richardson, Director of the Department of Transportation, spoke to the committee as to why Iowa needs additional revenue for road construction. She stated that there are four things happening at once to create this need: 1) Iowa has a large infrastructure to finance with a relatively small population; 2) the use of the roads has increased over the years, especially by commercial vehicles, which causes wear and tear; 3) the state and local jurisdictions are experiencing a flattening of revenues (at the state level, the average growth has been 1% since 2000); and 4) construction costs have experienced hyperinflation with a growth of 15% in one year.

Dr. Paul Hanley, an associate professor with the University of Iowa, discussed relevant material from research projects that he has

done concerning transportation. He reported that for Iowans, the latest census shows that the average miles driven per day is 33, and the average miles per gallon is 25, taking into account all types of non-commercial vehicles.

Dr. Hanley reported that the average person pays \$100 per year in state fuel taxes (which is currently \$0.207 per gallon). If there was a three cent increase in the state's fuel tax, the average person would pay \$14 more per year. Dr. Hanley stated that an increase in the gas tax will impact the vehicles that we choose to drive, our mode of travel, which destinations that we choose, and the number of trips that we take.

Next Steps & Meeting

The committee decided that, at their next meeting, they will try to identify increases in a variety of revenue sources that will total \$200 million once fully implemented. This was the amount of need identified by the Department of Transportation. The committee intends to take into consideration which persons would be affected with the identified increases, and attempt to balance the needs with those that would be affected.

Their next meeting is scheduled on November 19.

Auditor Suggests Changes to Iowa Student Loan

The Government Oversight Committee held hearings on student debt October 29th and 30th. During this meeting, the State Auditor, David Vault, presented his findings on the Iowa Student Loan Liquidity Corporation (ISL). Deputy Auditor Warren Jenkins presented a general overview of their findings. They did not find any fraud, at this point, but did suggest changes to the board structure and open meetings/records procedures.

Currently, a representative from the Iowa College Student Aid Commission (ICSAC) serves on the Board of the ISL and a representa-

tive from ISL serves on the Board of ICSAC. The auditor stated this is a potential conflict of interest since ICSAC has oversight of ISL.

A topic of interest that has been brought up several times about ISL and open records and meetings was also in the auditor's report. The auditor suggested that ISL keep all their meetings and records open since they deal with student loans and tax exempt bonding. However, the auditor did note that the tax exempt bonding status is not a direct state appropriation.

Finally, the auditor suggested that ISL be subject to an annual

audit, or as needed, due to the secondary nature of their loan market and, again, the tax exempt bonding authority.

Iowa Student Loan presented later in the day, and publicly stated they would take the auditor's recommendations very seriously. They did agree to turn over their financial documents, meeting records, and change board structure.

Government Oversight will meet again in December to discuss the new documents and listen to further discussions on student debt.

College Aid Says PLUS Loans Underutilized

As part of the discussions during the October Government Oversight meeting on student debt, the Iowa College Student Aid Commission (ICSAC) stated that Parent PLUS loans are underutilized in Iowa.

Parent PLUS loans are an opportunity for parents to take out a loan for their child that is attending college if they have not saved or set up other financing options. The loan is a federally backed loan available to a parent of a dependent child and will become due 60 days after disbursement of the loan.

The loan is another option to finance college in addition to federal Stafford, Perkins, or private loans. The PLUS loan has a federal interest rate cap, just as the other federally backed loans do, versus a

private loan having a variable rate subject to the lender.

ICSAC compared Iowa's usage of PLUS loans to other states around the Midwest, and noted that the usage is severely lower. The State of Missouri ranks 38th nationally in student debt and promotes the use of PLUS loans. Their usage has gone up 901% versus Iowa at 175% from 1995-2006.

Comparatively, Iowa's usage of private loans has gone up over 5000% versus the national average of 894% from 1995-2006. If a parent takes out a PLUS loan, a student may not have to take out a private loan that may have a higher interest rate.

It was suggested that the low usage of PLUS loans could be one of the contributing factors to the



reason Iowa is the highest in student debt in the nation. Other groups such as the community colleges and universities noted the underutilization of the loans as well.

It was suggested that the underutilization of PLUS loans is an opportunity to look at better financing for college. Parents and students need to be educated on their options to finance their higher education.

For more information on college funding, visit the Iowa College Student Aid Commission's website at: www.iowacollegeaid.gov.

Executive Order Addresses Diversity in Government

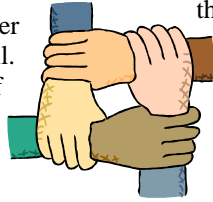
In an effort to address concerns related to minority hiring in state government, Governor Chet Culver issued Executive Order #4.

Upon issuing the order, Governor Culver stated, "It is no secret there have been some challenges over the past several years related

to minority hiring and promoting. We have spent time identifying the problems and now it is time for action. For this reason, I have is-

sued an Executive Order to address this important issue, and I expect all agency directors to follow it – no exceptions.”

The Executive Order creates a Diversity Council. The council is made up of members of the executive branch, collective bargaining units representing state employees, the private sector and nonprofit organizations. The council is charged with reviewing the state’s policies, procedures and practices related to the hiring of a diverse workforce. The council will make recommendations to insure the policies and procedures are implemented and followed throughout state government.



All executive branch agencies are to develop hiring and management practices that assure uniform hiring practices are applied throughout the agency. A written summary of each agency’s hiring practices is required to be submitted to the Director of the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) for approval by February 1, 2008.

DAS, in consultation with the Iowa Civil Rights Commission and the Department of Human Rights, is required to annually monitor the application of the screening methods used by state agencies, assess their impact on employee groups in the selection process and counsel

departments with regard to selection processes that pose barriers to any applicant group. Annual diversity training is also required for all state employees.

Among its other charges, the Diversity Council is required to develop a plan for training all state employees; develop a state government referral system, whereby applicants who interview with one agency and are not hired, may be referred to another agency for consideration; and to submit a written report to the Governor’s office no later than June 30 of each year outlining activities of the Council and progress made. The first report is due by June 30, 2008.

Iowa Climate Change Advisory Council Meets

The Iowa Climate Change Advisory Council met for the first time this month. The council is to provide recommendations to the Governor and Iowa Legislature for reducing statewide greenhouse gases, while considering the cost-effectiveness of different scenarios.

Council Chairman Dr. Jerry Schnoor, of the University of Iowa’s Center for Global/Regional Environmental Research, led the first meeting. The 23-member council selected Frank Cownie, mayor of Des Moines and representing local governments, as vice chair; and Ed Fallon, founder of Independence Movement for Iowa and representing the general public, as secretary. The council also de-

cidated to work with The Center for Climate Strategies, a nonprofit, impartial group of facilitators with expertise in assisting many other states in climate change strategy development.

Five subcommittees were formed and will focus on:

- energy efficiency and conservation
- clean and renewable energy
- transportation and land use efficiency
- agriculture and forestry
- cross-cutting issues, such as education

In addition, each subcommittee will seek further participation from technical experts. The subcommittees will meet twice between each monthly council meeting. The council and subcommittee meetings are open to the public.

The next council meeting is planned for December 12th in Davenport. The council plans to meet in various locations around the state in order to be accessible to Iowans.

For more information, visit the Climate Change Advisory Council website: www.iowadnr.gov/iccac/index.html

Criminal Code Reorganization Committee Meets

The Legislative Criminal Code Reorganization Study Committee met on Tuesday, October 30th. The committee was provided information about the current corrections system, drug courts, and from the Iowa Code Editor.

After presentations, the committee decided to create several subcommittees to further develop specific issues to be addressed by this committee. The committee’s work is at least a two-year process.

Subcommittees

The committee decided to develop four subcommittees that will work simultaneously. When the members on the subcommittees are finalized, they will begin work on

their issues. The full committee is not expected to meet again until after the 2008 legislative session.

The subcommittees are as follows:

- Foundational. This subcommittee would work on criminal code definitional issues, liabilities, defenses, and excuses.
- Logistics of Moving Code Sections. This subcommittee will look into the affects of physically mov-

ing certain carved out sections of the current Code into the Criminal Code chapters of the Code. What repercussions may occur? Any unintended consequences? This subcommittee will work with the Iowa Code Editor.

- Sentencing Classifications. This subcommittee will look into where in the Code the sentences should be placed. If they are all placed within the Criminal Code Chapters, how will they be refer-

enced in other sections of the Code?

- Specific Offenses and Crimes. This subcommittee would look into making any changes to current sentences and penalties.

Committee Hears Success of Drug Courts

The Legislature's Criminal Code Reorganization Committee heard from three judges who take part in drug courts in their judicial districts: Judge Pille from the 5th District (Polk County), Judge Hoover-Grinde from the 6th District (Benton, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Linn, and Tama Counties), and Judge Meadows from the 8th District (Appanoose, Davis, Des Moines, Henry, Jefferson, Keokuk, Lee, Louisa, Mahaska, Monroe, Poweshiek, Van Buren, Wapello, and Washington Counties).

How Drug Courts Work

All of the judges stated that their drug courts, for the most part, operate in the same manner. Unlike the Polk County and 8th Judicial Courts, Judge Hoover-Grinde of the 6th District stated that they have a full-time mental health professional who does mental health evaluations. The 6th District court has only been in existence for eight weeks.

Persons referred to drug courts have often been to prison before, and the judges stated that they try to find persons who are drug addicts, not criminals. They try to answer the question, is this person

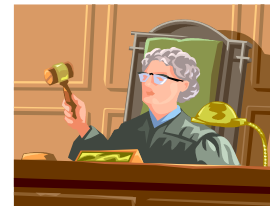
a criminal who does drugs, or a drug addict who turns to crime to feed their addiction?

The drug courts were described as an intensive supervision program that is an alternative to prison. The goal is to change the client's behavior by changing their thinking and reward good decisions. The rewards may not be considered significant by most people, a star of the week certificate with Starburst candies, or a bus pass, but it's the recognition that makes a difference.

Clients of the program are required to appear before the same judge once a week, and the program lasts for about 18 months. The clients are required to attend Alcoholic Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous, and complete their 12-step programs.

Benefits

There are statistics that show the benefits of drug courts, including economical benefits and recidivism rates. The non-partisan Legislative Services Agency (LSA) reports that the average direct cost (no administrative costs) for a client in a drug court for a period of 662 days, followed by one year of



probation, is \$10,400. The average cost for a person entering the prison system for 20 months, followed by one year of probation, is \$31,600. The cost for the person in the prison system does include direct and indirect costs.

Judge Meadows reported that the recidivism rate for graduates of his drug court program is 10%, while for persons released from prison it is 40%. Judge Pille of Polk County said 65% of people graduate from their program and of these, 65% have remained uninvolved with the corrections system. Over five years, that percentage climbs to 79%

The Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning Division is currently completing a longitudinal analysis of the drug courts showing definitive outcome data, a cost/benefit analysis, and comparison of recidivism rate. This report is expected to be available in 2008.

Grant Deadline for Arts and Culture Organizations

The deadline for non-profit arts, history and cultural organizations to submit applications for the Department of Cultural Affairs' (DCA) new Small Operating Support (SOS) grants is Nov. 30, 2007.

SOS grants are targeted to arts, history and cultural organizations with annual budgets of less than \$150,000. Applicants may request up to five percent of their annual budget, or a maximum of \$5,000. This round of SOS grants funding must be used from January 1 through June 30, 2008.

SOS grants help organizations with operational costs to free up dollars for other programming, improved efficiency, or their opera-

tion. It could help with the hiring a consultant, organizing funding drives, marketing, or technology upgrades.

The program funding is for one year, with no commitment for funding in future years. SOS grants are available to assist healthy arts, history, and cultural organizations enhance quality of life in Iowa communities. Examples of organizations that could be funded include arts organizations, botanical centers, historical organizations, cultural centers or centers for the performing arts.

SOS grant funds may not be used for capital expenses or for political lobbying activities, or as

matching funds for activities already receiving funds from another DCA grant program. The organization must be registered with the Iowa Secretary of State's office as an Iowa nonprofit organization. The organization must also be in existence in its community for at least 3 years.

SOS applications must be in DCA office by 4:30 p.m. Friday, Nov. 30, 2007. DCA is at 600 E. Locust Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319. Applicants will receive notification of award decisions within 45 days of the application deadline.

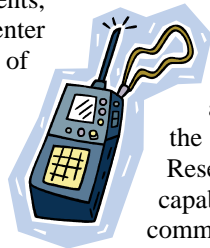
Interoperable Communications Board Meets

The Legislature created a 15-member Statewide Interoperable Communications System Board this past session in House File 353. The board held their first meeting on Monday, October 29th. The board is made up of local sheriff's and police offices, fire departments, emergency communications center managers, and representatives of six state agencies.

The board elected Captain Todd Misel as the chair. Captain Misel is head of communications at the Iowa State Patrol. Dena McKenna, who heads the communications for the Story County Sheriff's office, was elected as vice-chair.

Board member John Benson, from Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HLSEM), briefed the board about the \$10.9 million grant Iowa is eligible to receive to assist public safety agencies with interoperable communications systems. The State submitted our application on August 20th.

Eighty percent of the federal Public Safety Interoperable Communications (PSIC) grant is a pass through to local public safety agencies and 20% stays with the State. HLSEM said funds will be made available in the spring of 2008.



In addition, almost \$850,000 of the grant must be set aside for the creation of the Strategic Technology Reserve, which must be capable of re-establishing communications when existing critical infrastructure is damaged or destroyed in an emergency or major disaster.

To receive this grant, the State needs to develop a statewide plan on how public safety agencies will be interoperable, how local and tribal government needs will be met, and how non-governmental response organizations needs will be addressed. The plan is due on December 3, 2007.

Mr. Benson provided the board with the current draft statewide plan. The Board will meet again on November 19 and 20 to further define this plan and start work on the Strategic Technology Reserve.

House File 353 defines the board's mission as to develop, implement, and oversee policy, operations, and fiscal components of communications interoperability efforts at the state and local level, and coordinate with similar efforts at the federal level, with the ultimate objective of developing and overseeing the operation of a statewide integrated public safety communications interoperability system.

The legislation also defines "interoperability" as the ability of public safety and public services personnel to communicate and to share data on an immediate basis, on demand, when needed, and when authorized.