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The Longest Day in Legislative History: 67 Hours of Voting

The buzz around the Capitol this week was the amazing set of events surrounding HF 333, or “Prevailing Wage.” As I have written before, I was opposed to this bill from the start. The defeat of this bill is a victory for Iowa’s taxpayers and businesses. Regardless of merits of the bill, the process was fascinating and historic.

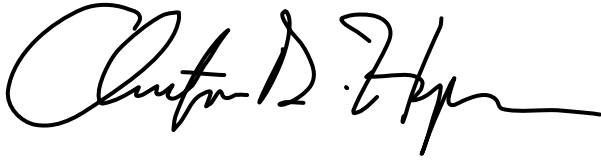
We were originally scheduled for debate of this bill on Thursday morning, leaving plenty of time for an open and public debate. Unfortunately, debate was pushed back until early evening, ostensibly to craft amendments to win votes from two additional majority party members. By the time these amendments were presented, our debate would have occurred in the middle of the night, a clear disservice to Iowans. Republicans were able to broker a deal to recess for the night, and start again on Friday so that debate and votes could be in the light of day.

Rarely will the majority party bring a bill to the House floor for debate unless they know they have enough votes for passage. Because of this, our floor debate has little outcome on the final outcome of the voting. Regardless, those of us opposing the bill put forward a debate of which I am proud. We asked the same questions Iowans have asked of us: Why should there be artificially high wage rates at a time when so many Iowans are out of work? Why are we considering legislation which further burdens Iowa taxpayers?

After five hours of debate, we finally voted. To our surprise, the bill received only 50 votes, one shy of the 51 needed for passage. The Speaker of the House ordinarily would close the voting machine and announce the outcome, but the announcement did not come. A murmur began to build, with members asking one another what was happening. Finally the Speaker of the House announced he would leave the voting machine open, sitting in the Speaker’s chair and wait all weekend for one extra vote. Republicans took shifts staying in the chamber too, as we were still officially in session. I volunteered for the 10:00 p.m. Saturday until 4:00 a.m. Sunday morning shift. No votes changed, yet the House was open throughout.

The necessary 51st vote never came. At 1:00 the following Monday, after 67 hours devoted solely to voting, the Speaker of the House announced the result. With a final count of 49 ‘yes’ and 49 ‘no’, the price fixing for public projects bill failed. Although the

bill is eligible for reconsideration, Iowa's economy and Iowa's taxpayers for now can claim victory.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew D. Hoyer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.