

The Hartsuch Herald

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State of Iowa
Eighty-third General Assembly
STATEHOUSE
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

STANDING COMMITTEES
Human Resources (Ranking Member)
Commerce
State Government
Veterans Affairs
Environment & Energy Independence
Human Services
Appropriations Subcommittee

Democrats Consolidate Political Power by Pushing “Iowa Irrelevancy Act”

Senate Democrats passed Senate Study Bill #1128 intended to circumvent the Constitutional requirements for electing the President of the United States. This legislation known as “The National Popular Vote Compact” requires that Iowa and all other states participating in the compact ignore the actual vote within the state and instead vote their electoral votes according to the national popular vote. This would essentially make our vote irrelevant in the state. If enacted, Iowa will become a fly-over state in the national presidential campaigns as candidates focus their attention on the more populace areas of the country.

While proponents of this measure say that the compact will insure that the electoral college vote will reflect the national popular vote, any state may remove themselves from the compact up to six months prior to the general election for President of the United States. This would mean that the majority party could selectively remove certain states from the compact in order to gain political advantage. This potential for manipulation undermines the integrity of our current system of voting and should be flatly rejected. Senate Democrats passed this bill out of committee and are expected to bring this to the floor over the objections of Senate Republicans.

House Democrats Act Desperately To Promote Union Interests

When the pro-union prevailing wage bill failed by one vote last Friday, the Democrat House leadership took an unprecedented step by keeping the voting board open over the weekend to allow critical representatives who vote NO to reconsider their vote. Rule 75 was called and normally abbreviates

such voting by requiring an immediate roll call vote on the bill. Democrat Leadership felt it was their prerogative to delay the finalization of the vote for three days, and finally closed the vote on Monday.

This behavior sets a dangerous precedent by setting up a condition where legislators may be subject to intimidation and violence in an attempt to coerce a vote. Fortunately, there were no reported cases of violence. However, Democrat leaders stripped Representative McKinley Bailey of his bill responsibilities for key veteran bills immediately following his NO vote. This is easily interpreted as a punitive action. In a similar manner, a liberal activist group leveled an ethics complaint the following day against Rep. Dolores Mertz claiming that because she and her family are farmers this creates a conflict with her position as chairman of the agriculture committee.

Culver Budget: Rhetoric v. Reality

While Gov. Culver boasts of \$400 million in budget cuts for FY 2010, State Auditor David Vautt, CPA says that the true decrease is only \$43 million (.7%). While many key programs are facing 10% spending cuts, these have been offset by spending increases in a few protected areas such as K-12 education and Medicaid.

Examples of Gov. Culver proposed cuts include mental health, education for the blind, and public health spending to treat communicable diseases like tuberculosis; he preserved spending on new initiatives like the public health department credentialing, and the model core curriculum. While the 2009 education allowable growth rate is 4%, he only funds this to 2% which puts pressure on school districts to raise taxes for the difference.

Misalignment of budget resources has created substantial apprehension among constituents who

depend on these key program areas. Furthermore, it impresses upon the average person that the budget is being cut substantially when it is really not. This has also served to convince the public of the need for the federal stimulus package in order to restore the budget to baseline levels.

Senator Hartsuch will work to balance the competing budget priorities for the common good rather than political gain. He asks the Governor to do the same.

Senate Debates Bicycle Road Use

Senate Democrats passed Senate File #117 pertaining to the operation of bicycles on Iowa roads. This bill allows bicyclist to occupy the full lane of traffic and requires that anyone wishing to pass must allow at least a 5 foot margin from the bike. Furthermore, it preempts all local ordinances and prevents municipalities from determining where bikes may or may not ride.

Senate Democrats rejected an amendment by Sen. Hamerlinck which would have prevented municipalities from being liable for bicycle accidents which might arise because of normal wear and tear on the roads. Potholes are unavoidable and without this protection, this bill will likely bring increased liability for our municipalities.

If enacted, his bill would allow a rider to take up a full lane of traffic on Kimberly road during rush hour without allowing any manner for other traffic to pass the cyclist. While the bill had bipartisan opposition, the Democrat majority ignored virtually all of the amendments which would have improved the bill.

Understanding Insurance Mandates

Each year, the State of Iowa adds a few more insurance mandates. An insurance mandate is a required benefit which must be covered for any health insurance policy regulated by the state. Currently, only 20-25% of individuals are covered by these policies. Usually, large employers have policies that are governed under ERISA which is a federal law that preempts all state law. In other words, the state can't touch 75% of the plans in Iowa.

All mandates raise the cost of insurance since they force insurance companies to pay for additional claims which they would not otherwise have. Politicians use insurance mandates as a convenient mechanism for convincing people that they are really doing something good for some group of people with a particular health problem. In reality, they are merely raising the cost of health

care, and driving the cost beyond the means of the average person. They can do this because it doesn't cost anything to the state. Essentially this is a hidden tax on healthcare, and these should be resisted.

In order to balance the needs of affected individuals with the need to keep health insurance low. Senator Hartsuch has proposed that the state of Iowa underwrite the cost of certain key mandates. This is a novel approach which appears to have acceptance in the business community.

Several insurance mandates include:

- SF #1 Mandated coverage for autism
- SF #21 Mandated coverage for experimental cancer treatment.
- SSB #1122 Mandated coverage for Prosthetics.

Senator Hartsuch is working to keep Health Insurance affordable.

Get Connected!

Sen. Hartsuch and Rep. Linda Miller continue to meet with constituents at the three local Hy-Vee restaurants every Friday morning during the session. Sen. Hartsuch will not be available on Friday March 6th but he can always be reached by phone.

Thank You Hy-Vee!

Visit with Senator Hartsuch:

8 – 9 AM 4064 East 53rd St.
9 – 10 AM 1823 East Kimberly Rd.

Visit with Representative Miller:

9 – 10 AM 2900 Devils Glen Rd.
(Schedule subject to change)

Conference Call Schedule

Join Sen. Hartsuch and Rep. Miller every Monday night for a conference call to discuss the coming week at the Capital. All are welcome to participate and ask questions.

The conference call will take place **every Monday at 5:00 PM.** (Debate schedule permitting.)

In order to access the conference call:

- 1) Phone 1-218-486-1616**
- 2) Enter access code 747269 #**

We look forward to hearing from you. For additional questions call David at 563-823-8442.