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Your Voice: My Voice
2008 Session in Review

—Representative Ako Abdul-Samad

This year, I am pleased to report that the Iowa Legislature made a large number of improvements to the quality of life for all Iowans. This was a landmark year, where we improved the lives of Iowans through advances including the areas of education, healthcare, and re-entry for those who have been incarcerated.

I had the opportunity to sit on the bi-partisan committee that looked towards healthcare reform. This committee suggested several changes, to improve areas including quality and accessibility. One change that is significant is that all children will be eligible for either private health insurance coverage, or coverage under Hawk-I during the next three years.

Iowa's schools and curriculum also received a few changes to improve both the physical school buildings and the education being taught to our children. Iowa schools are now required to adopt the Iowa Model Core Curriculum. This standardization requires at least four years of English. It also requires three years of math, science and social studies. This curriculum also includes 21st Century skills including the areas of health, technology and financial literacy.

In addition to the standardization of curriculum, the Iowa Legislature also examined the local option sales tax. The legislature changed the code relating to this issue to establish a statewide tax. This will ensure that each student gets their fair share of state money relating to school infrastructure improvement projects.

This year, I also worked on a Certificate of Employability for those re-entering society from being incarcerated. This program will help reduce the number of re-offenders in our prison system. This program will be run by the Iowa Board of Parole and will serve as a way to certify that an ex-offender is ready for reentry into the workplace.

House File 901 is a measure that sets up a pilot program in Polk County for the establishment of a mandatory training for security personal at establishments which hold a liquor license. The training program shall include training on de-escalation, anger-management, use of force for removal of patrons, recognition of fake or altered forms of identification, and other techniques. Other training includes disaster preparedness, information on laws applicable to establishments with a liquor license, and information on civil rights and unfair practices.

Last year, I authored legislation to establish culturally-competent substance abuse programs. I worked this year to ensure that we continued funding this grant program so that it may continue through the next fiscal year.

This year was a year where we accomplished bi-partisan change in many areas. I am now looking toward the next session of the Iowa Legislature, and would like your input on what issues are affecting you, and how we can improve the lives of all Iowans. Please do not hesitate to contact me via e-mail or telephone, which is in the box at left.

Thank you for your continued support; remember, your voice is my voice.

Core Curriculum Signed into Law

Governor Chet Culver signed Senate File 2216, the Iowa Model Core Curriculum bill, last week in Independence, Iowa. Using the model core curriculum will now be mandatory for all accredited public and non-public schools starting this July 1.

Iowa is currently the only state that does not have any mandatory statewide measures or standards for curriculum and teaching. A model core curriculum exists but it is voluntary and schools do not have to adopt it. The core curriculum provides local school districts with a guide to delivering instructional content that is challenging and meaningful to students.

In developing the core curriculum, the following were considered:

- The needs of students.

- The needs of a changing workforce.
- The need to remain globally competitive.

The curriculum that was developed identifies the essential concepts and skill sets needed for literacy, mathematics, science and social studies, as well as 21st century learning skills that include civic literacy, financial literacy, technology literacy, health literacy, and employability. The Iowa Core Curriculum encourages instructional practices that deeply engage students by requiring them to be active learners and critical thinkers who can apply their learning to new and unpredictable situations.

Senate File 2216 now establishes that the Iowa Core Curriculum is mandatory in all grades. The school districts must adopt a set of core content standards that

include reading, mathematics, and science that are similar to the standards authorized under No Child Left Behind.

As part of the high school curriculum for graduation requirements, a school district must adopt, at a minimum, four years of English and language arts, three years of mathematics, three years of science, and three years of social studies. Also included in the high school core curriculum will be the core content standards and 21st Century learning skills.

School districts have until 2010 to begin implementation of the core curriculum into all grades, with full implementation in grades 9-12 by 2012, including a plan for graduation for each student. Full implementation for grades K-8 has to be in place by 2014. Accredited non-public schools may request a waiver for up to two years.

Landmark Health Care Bill

This week, Governor Culver signed House File 2539, which will provide health care coverage for all children in Iowa in the next three years. The bill creates several initiatives and studies to improve health care and wellness for Iowans.

It is the intent of the General Assembly that all Iowans have health care coverage, with the first priority being health care coverage for all children by January 1, 2011. In addition, the Legislature wants to decrease health care costs by implementing reforms that assure the availability of private health insurance coverage for Iowans.

More Iowans Covered

The *hawk-i* Expansion Program is created to provide health insurance to children who are at or

below 300% federal poverty level. For a family of 4, this is equivalent to \$63,600 a year.

The Iowa Comprehensive Health Insurance Association is to develop a comprehensive health care coverage plan to cover all uninsured children. In addition, the association will develop options to provide access to private, unsubsidized, affordable, qualified health care coverage to all children, adults, and families who are not otherwise eligible for health care coverage through public programs.

The bill requires health insurance companies to cover children up to the age of 25, or as long as the child maintains full-time status as a student in a post-secondary educational institution. In addition, individuals who move from a group insurance policy to an individual

insurance policy will not be underwritten due to preexisting conditions.

Lowering Costs

The bill creates a council, as a public/private effort, to promote the adoption and use of health information technology in Iowa. The council will make recommendations to improve health care quality, increase patient safety, and reduce health care costs.

The bill creates patient centered medical homes, which focus on prevention, wellness, and chronic care management that should lower costs and improve quality.

The Department of Elder Affairs (DEA) is to work with other state agencies to develop educational and patient centered informa-

tion on end of life care for terminally ill patients and health care professionals.

Prevention and Wellness

The Iowa Department of Public Health will develop a state initiative for prevention and chronic care management. The bill also requires the department to establish a grant program to help local com-

munities to promote healthy lifestyles.

A Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness and Nutrition is established, to help implement a statewide plan to increase physical activity, improve physical fitness, improve nutrition, and promote healthy behaviors of Iowans.

Direct Care Workers

A council will advise the Department of Public Health regarding regulation and certification of direct care workers. The Department of Human Services is required to convene an initial advisory committee to develop recommendations regarding wages, and other compensation paid to direct care workers in nursing facilities.

Increased Efforts to Improve Water Quality

Iowa has over 71,000 miles of streams and rivers and more than 161,000 acres of lakes, ponds and wetlands. Iowa also has over 200 waterbodies on the impaired water list, which means those lakes, wetlands, streams, and portions of rivers do not meet all state water quality standards.

The Legislature maintained and expanded several programs this year addressing water quality.

Surface Water Protection

The Legislature adopted House File 2400, known as the Surface Water Protection Act. The bill calls for 56 regional watershed assessments to be completed in five years, providing a summary of the overall condition of Iowa’s watersheds. In addition, smaller community-based subwatershed improvement plans are to be developed and implemented.

The bill also creates a Water Resources Coordinating Council to coordinate water efforts throughout Iowa. The success of the council’s efforts will ultimately be measured by the improvement to the quality of surface water in Iowa.

This is the start of a comprehensive plan to address our surface water protection needs. At this time, no funding is provided for this effort. The Legislature did, however, maintain the nearly \$3 million appropriation for water quality monitoring of our lakes and rivers.

Watershed Improvement

Iowa’s watershed improvement grant program is authorized another \$5 million for next year, to improve water quality in Iowa. This program was first started in 2005 to enhance water quality through a variety of impairment-based, locally directed watershed improvement projects. This brings the total to \$20 million the state has provided for local watershed and water quality improvement efforts.

A total of \$7 million is provided to Iowa’s soil conservation cost-share program, to help landowners install measures to control soil erosion. In addition, over \$2.5 million is appropriated to the state’s watershed protection program, which provides multi-objective resource protections for flood control, water quality, erosion control, and natural resource conservation. And, \$1.5 million is dedicated to closing agricultural drainage wells, which are direct conduits into our groundwater.

The Legislature maintained the \$1.5 million appropriation to restore and construct wetlands for the purposes of intercepting tile line runoff, reducing nutrient loss, improving water quality, and enhancing agricultural production practices. And, another \$1.5 million is appropriated to encourage and assist farmers in enrolling in the continuous sign-up federal conservation reserve program and work with them to enhance their revegetation

efforts to improve water quality and habitat.

Wastewater Treatment

The wastewater treatment financial assistance program is provided \$3 million for grants to enhance water quality and to assist communities in complying with water quality standards. The money goes to disadvantaged communities to upgrade local water treatment facilities.

Language was also adopted specifically stating it’s the Legislature’s intent that efforts be made to maximize grants and loans available for water, wastewater, and sewer projects, especially in communities with populations of 200 or less.

Water Use and Allocation

Iowa’s water quantity issue is being studied by the Department of Natural Resources, in regards to the allocation and use of water resources, the protection and management of water resources, and the preclusion of conflicts among users, including new ethanol plants. DNR is provided \$500,000 to continue work on this comprehensive statewide study of water availability. The last time the state’s water plan was updated was in 1985.

The department is also authorized to assess water use fees to the businesses that use our water. This revenue will help the department in implementing and enforcing regu-

lations pertaining to water allocation, use, diversion, storage, and withdrawal; and completing investigations needed to issue new or modified permits or to resolve water interference complaints.

REAP

Iowa's Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) program

will receive \$18 million next year, which is an increase of \$7 million over the last two years. Twenty percent of these moneys (nearly \$3.5 million) are dedicated to soil and water enhancement projects.

Lakes Restoration

Another \$8.6 million is earmarked for implementation of lake

restoration projects. Priority is to those projects that have established watershed improvement initiatives and community support in accordance with the DNR annual lake restoration plan and report. DNR has identified over \$60 million in critical lake restoration needs.

Governor Signs Statewide One Cent Sales Tax Bill

Governor Culver signed House File 2663, the bi-partisan bill that will create a statewide one cent sales tax in place of the local option sales tax used now for school infrastructure purposes. This legislation would make the current one cent local option sales tax for schools a statewide sales tax. It also creates a separate property tax equity and relief fund.

Starting July 1, 2008, the current local option sales tax that a school district can impose for school infrastructure is repealed and is replaced with a permanent statewide one cent tax. Currently, all 99 counties have approved the one cent local option sales tax, with Linn and Johnson counties being the last to approve the local option in 2007. Other counties, such as

Woodbury, have already reauthorized the local option tax for another 10 years.

The one cent local option tax could only be used for specific purposes outlined in a "revenue purpose plan." By law, the purposes that can be included relate to school infrastructure such as the cost of construction or repayment of bonds, or for property tax relief.

House File 2663 would still require that school districts use the revenue for these specific purposes but would allow counties to develop a new "revenue purpose plan". The new plan must still meet infrastructure or property tax relief requirements.

Under the new law, all the sales tax money will go into one

"pot." It will be then be distributed out to school districts on a per pupil basis. Counties in their first 10 years of their SILO, approved prior to 2003, will keep all their revenues until that initial 10 years is up. Linn and Johnson counties will also keep all their revenues for 5 years. In 2014, all counties will be contributing to the statewide pool.

Final estimates for distribution in the first year, fiscal year 2009, are \$410.9 million to school districts. Another \$32 million would be used for property tax relief and distributed out of the property tax equity and relief fund in fiscal year 2011. The property tax relief fund is in addition to the current allocation of \$18 million in fiscal year 2009 and \$24 million in fiscal year 2010 for property tax relief.

Rain Gardens Encouraged

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) is teaming up with WHO Radio to encourage Iowans to plant rain gardens this year to control runoff and protect water quality. The goal is 1,040 gardens.

A rain garden is a flower garden that captures runoff from rain that falls on roofs, driveways or yards. The garden is a depression or a shallow bowl made in the landscape that is level from side to side and end to end.

Runoff that travels to your rain garden is temporarily ponded and then allows water to infiltrate into

the soil rather than running into streets and storm drains. Dirty runoff that enters storm drains is sent directly into receiving waters such as rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, or wetlands.

IDALS says that it would surprise homeowners to know that hundreds of thousands of gallons of rain falls on an urban lot in a year. In Iowa, rainfall averages anywhere from 28-36 inches per year. That means an acre of land in Iowa will receive anywhere from 760,000 to 977,500 gallons of rain in a typical year. The owner of a half acre urban lot in central Iowa would re-

ceive approximately 434,500 gallons of rain each year.

To visualize how much water 434,500 gallons actually is, imagine capturing all that rainfall in 50 gallon barrels. A row of barrels more than 4 miles long would be needed to hold all the rain a typical lot receives.

The project is being coined as the 1040 Clean Water Act, Rain Garden Project. For more information on this project, visit the website at <http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/pres/rainGarden.asp>.

Translations of Voter Registration Forms Available

In a recent ruling by Polk County District Court Judge Douglas Staskal, Iowa's foreign language voter registration forms were declared in violation of the state's English language law. In response, the Iowa Council for International Understanding is providing the Iowa voter registration forms in multiple languages on their website.

A suit was brought against Governor Chet Culver and Secretary of State Michael Mauro by U.S. Representative Steve King, (R) Fifth Congressional District. King contended that offering voter registration forms in languages other than English violated the state's law that requires all official government documents to be in English only. The voter registration forms were offered in English, Spanish, Laotian, Bosnian and Vietnamese.

Iowa's English language law was passed by the Legislature and signed into law in 2002. Under the law, all official documents, regulations, orders, transactions, proceedings, programs, meetings, publications or actions taken or issued, which are conducted or regulated by, or on behalf of, or representing the state and all of its political subdivisions shall be in the English language.

The law provides for some exceptions to this requirement. One of the exceptions is "any language usage required by or necessary to secure the rights guaranteed by the Constitution and law of the United States of America or the Constitution of the State of Iowa."

Iowa Secretary of State Michael Mauro has indicated he will not appeal the ruling and the non-

English forms have been removed from the secretary of state website.

The Iowa Council for International Understanding voiced its concern in a May 13 Des Moines Register article about the ruling, saying, "the availability of forms in languages other than English is critical to people of Iowa who are legally participating in the election process."

The non-English forms can be accessed at the Iowa Council for International Understanding (ICIU) website at <http://www.iciu.org>. The council offers the forms in Vietnamese, Spanish, Laotian and Bosnian. They note that the translated forms are not official state documents, but will allow people who do not speak English to transcribe the information onto official English forms.

Governor Signs Two Major Identity Theft Bills

Governor Culver signed two identity theft bills, one of which requires that Iowa consumers be notified if their personal information is compromised, and the other allows Iowa consumers to control the release of their credit information by credit reporting agencies.

Notice of Security Breach

Senate File 2308 requires notification of consumers, if there is a security breach involving their computerized personal information. This applies to the entity that owns or licenses the information. If the breach occurs at another entity that possesses the information, that entity notifies the owner or licensee, who then notifies consumers.

Notice must include the date and description of the breach, type of data obtained, how to contact reporting agencies, and how to report suspected identity theft incidents to the Attorney General or to local law enforcement.

Credit Security Freeze

Senate File 2277 allows a consumer to require that credit reporting agencies freeze the release of their credit information. The request must be sent by certified mail, with proper identification.

The reporting agency must start the freeze within five business days of getting the request. Within 10 business days of the start of the

freeze, the agency must send written confirmation and a personal password for the consumer to use when authorizing suspension or removal of the freeze. The consumer may get a temporarily suspension of the freeze, which lets the agency release their credit report so the consumer can open a new line of credit.

A credit reporting agency can't charge any fee to a victim of identity theft if, with the initial freeze request, the consumer submits a copy of the police report regarding the unlawful use of their ID information by another person

Helping Veterans in Need

A Veterans Trust Fund was established in 2003 as a separate fund under the control of the Commission of Veterans Affairs. This was intended to create a \$50 million endowment for the Commission of Veterans Affairs to be used for the benefit of veterans and their spouses and dependents. This fund currently has a balance of approximately \$5 million. Under current law, the Commission of Veterans Affairs is authorized to appropriate the interest and earnings on the fund as long as it maintains a minimum balance of \$5 million.

The Legislature approved two pieces of legislation that were recently signed into law by the Governor, to enhance the utilization of the Veterans Trust Fund. The first bill, Senate File 2124, expands the list of authorized expenditures and House File 2359 establishes additional resources for the trust fund.

Expanded Uses

Senate File 2124 expands the list of authorized expenditures to include durable medical equipment

to allow veterans to remain in their home; expenses related to hearing care, dental care, vision care, or prescription drugs; expenses related to ambulance and emergency room services for veterans who are trauma patients; emergency repair to vehicle; housing repair; or temporary housing assistance; expenses to establish whether a minor child is a dependent of a deceased veteran, and matching funds for veteran service organizations.

Veterans are also eligible for assistance through the trust fund for the following expenses, which were not changed by SF 2124:

- Job training or college tuition assistance for job retraining.
- Unemployment assistance during a period of unemployment due to prolonged physical or mental illness or disability resulting from military service.
- Individual counseling or family counseling programs.

- Family support group programs or programs for children of members of the military.

- Honor guard services.

Lottery Games for Fund

House File 2359 directs the State Lottery to create two additional scratch tickets and two additional pull-tab games annually with the profits dedicated to veterans, their spouses, and dependents. The Lottery estimates that these additional games would generate approximately \$3 million annually.

The bill dedicates the lottery ticket profits into the Veterans Trust Fund, until the fund reaches a balance of \$50 million or more. Once the trust fund is filled, the remaining moneys are appropriated to the county offices of veteran affairs. The funds are distributed to the counties 50% equally to each county and 50% based on population.

Kids 12 and Under Required to Wear Life Jackets

This summer, if you plan on going boating in Iowa, you better remember to put a life jacket on your child. As of May 10, 2008, children 12 and under are now required to wear a life jacket while boating.

For the first year, the Department of Natural Resources can only issue warning tickets. The department plans to spend this summer educating parents on the new law.

Currently, a life jacket for every person is required to be in the boat. However, boaters are not required to wear them. Previously,

Iowa was one of only three states that did not require kids to wear their life jackets while boating.

House File 2612 requires that children wear the life jacket only while the boat is moving. They also do not need to wear them in an enclosed cabin or below deck, or if they are a passenger on a commercial boat with a capacity of 25 people or more. After the one-year warning period, there will be a \$25 fine for violations.

The National Transportation Safety Board has said the failure of

wearing a life jacket is the leading cause of drowning fatalities.

Governor Culver signed House File 2612 into law on May 10th. This new law mirrors federal law. Federal waters in Iowa are the Mississippi and Missouri rivers; and Saylorville, Red Rock, Rathbun, and Coralville reservoirs. The Department of Natural Resources told lawmakers that officers could not enforce federal law without an Iowa law.

Workforce Centers to Remain Open

The Economic Development Budget bill, House File 2699, was signed this week by Governor Culver. It provides additional resources to maintain Iowa's Workforce Centers, which provide services to businesses and job seekers. Funding for these centers was one of the last budget issues worked out during the Legislative session.

Some workforce centers were in jeopardy of closing due to a reduction in federal funding. This created a \$6.3 million hole in funding.

Had this hole not been filed, the 34 centers would have been closed in Atlantic, Boone, Center-

ville, Charles City, Cherokee, Clarinda, Clinton, Decorah, Denison, Emmetsburg, Estherville, Fairfield, Fort Madison, Glenwood, Harlan, Humboldt, Iowa Falls, Keokuk, Manchester, Maquoketa, Mt. Pleasant, New Hampton, Newton, Oelwein, Orange City, Osceola, Pella, Perry, Pocahontas, Red Oak, Shenandoah, Washington, Waverly, and Webster City. The other centers, in mainly larger urban areas, would have experienced longer lines for services.

The Legislature and Governor responded by providing enough additional state funding, and interest dollars from the Unemployment Trust Fund, to keep all the work-

force centers open. This plan passed on a party-line vote.

Workforce Development Centers provide employment assistance, such as unemployment problem solving, job searching and placement, résumé preparation, career planning, and reemployment services. They also provide assistance for the hard to employ through the Promise Jobs program and Workforce Investment Act. Services are also provided to employers, such as various types of labor market information, work opportunity and welfare to work tax credits, work permits and information on required postings at a job site.

Governor Signs Bills Protecting the Environment

Governor Culver has signed two bills that will protect Iowa's land and water.

House File 2668 prohibits businesses from disposing of used oil and used oil filters in sanitary landfills. Instead, the bill requires that these filters be separated out and recycled. In addition, a retailer of oil or oil filters must accept used oil or oil filters from customers or post a notification of locations where a customer may properly

dispose them. The notice must also say that it is illegal to dispose of used oil and used oil filters in a sanitary landfill. The law takes effect July 1, 2008.

Similarly, House File 2669 requires that a person who discards solid waste must separate out mercury-added thermostats to be recycled properly. A mercury-added thermostat uses a mercury switch to sense and control the temperature. Beginning July 1, 2009, the bill

prohibits the sale of mercury-added thermostats. Lastly, to track the progress of the collection and recycling of mercury-added thermostats, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources must submit an annual report to the General Assembly and the Governor.

Both bill ideas were suggested by students at West Branch Middle School.

Governor Signs County Veteran Affairs Requirements

Governor Culver signed Senate File 2134, which establishes training requirements for executive directors of county veteran affairs commissions and mandates that county offices serving veterans must remain open at least 20 hours per week. The bill establishes a \$1 million appropriation to defray the cost to counties. Counties will have one year to prepare for the new requirements as the bill takes effect on July 1, 2009.

The Department of Veterans Affairs, which is currently required to provide training for executive directors of county veteran affairs commissions, is now directed to provide training that is accredited by the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers. The training is also required to ensure the executive director and administrators are proficient in the use of electronic mail; general computer use; and use of the Inter-

net to access information regarding facilities, benefits, and services available to veterans and their families.

The county commissions, subject to approval of the board of supervisors, are required to employ an executive director or administrator who has the power to employ other employees when needed, including administrative or clerical assistants. Counties would have the flexibility to employ an ad-

ministrator, in lieu of an executive director, who does not meet all the qualifications for commissioners. The administrator may also hold another position within the county. The executive director or administrator will have one year to become certified, or are required to be removed from office. The executive director or administrator must keep up with the continuing education requirements established by the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers. If certification requirements are not maintained, it is cause for removal from office.

The duties of the executive director, administrators, and employees include the following:

- Inform members of the armed forces, veterans, and their dependents of all federal, state, and local laws enacted for their benefit.

- Assist all residents of the state who served in the armed forces of the United States and their relatives, beneficiaries, and dependents in receiving from the United States and this state any and all compensation, pensions, hospitalization, insurance, education, employment pay and gratuities, loan guarantees, or any other aid or benefit to which they may be entitled under any law.
- The Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs and county veteran affairs offices are prohibited from charging for any service provided to any individual.

The bill requires a certain minimum number of hours for the county commission of veteran affairs office to be open:

- Counties with a population of 30,000 or less are required to be open a minimum of 20 hours.

- Counties with a population of more than 30,000 and less than 60,000 are required to be open a minimum of 30 hours.

- Counties with a population of more than 60,000 are required to be open a minimum of 40 hours.

- Counties sharing services of an executive director are required to consider the aggregate population of such counties when determining the number of hours of service. The number of hours are to be allocated in proportion that the population of each county bears to the aggregate population.

- The hours that the office is open are required to be posted in a prominent position outside the office.

Betting on Illegal Animal Fights a Felony

As of July 1, 2008, betting on the outcome of an illegal dog fight or cock fight carries a class D felony penalty, which is up to five years in prison and maximum fine of \$7,500. Governor Culver signed Senate File 2203 into law on May 7th.

In addition, the penalty for being a spectator at these illegal contests has been increased to a class D felony for second and subsequent offenses. The first offense remains

the same as current law, an aggravated misdemeanor (up to two years in prison and a maximum fine of \$6,250).

A class D felony is the same penalty as for owners of the establishments, promoters, owners of the animals, trainers, breeders, buyers and sellers, or transporters.

These contests are organized for the entertainment or profit of spectators where the animal is injured, tormented, or killed. Sup-

porters say these are brutal events and the sport only exists because people want to bet on them. The spectators are part of the group setting these up. They believe a strong animal fighting law helps prevent cruelty to animals and protects the public.

Currently, 19 states have felony penalties for attending these illegal events.

Education Budget Signed by Governor

The education budget was signed by the Governor in Davenport in May 9. House File 2679 appropriates a total of \$1.14 billion for many education related purposes.

Education funding goes to several departments including the Department for the Blind, College Aid Commission, the Department of

Education, and the Board of Regents and its institutions.

Higher Education

Higher education received a boost again this year to aid students in funding their post-secondary education through grants, scholarships, and work study opportunities. There is also additional funding to community colleges and

state universities schools to help keep the cost of tuition affordable for middle class families.

The budget appropriates \$1 million for work study. The federal government also appropriates \$13 million to Iowa for work study programs. The Governor's initiative for All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship receives \$4 million for need

based assistance. The Iowa College Student Aid Commission will receive \$64 million. This includes a 4% increase for tuition grants, for a total of \$55.5 million, to be distributed to students attending Iowa's private colleges.

Community colleges receive an increase of \$10.1 million and this additional money has allowed several community colleges to roll back their proposed tuition increases.

The STEM (Science, Engineering, Technology, and Mathematics) Collaborative Initiative between the Regents schools receives \$4 million. This initiative

encourages students to enter these important fields of study.

Before and After School

Before and after school programs receive \$595,000 in this budget. With supplements from other budgets, these programs will receive a total of approximately \$1 million.

Kindergarten-12

The department of education receives \$244.5 million. Included in that allocation is \$2.6 million for the mandatory implementation of the Iowa Model Core Curriculum.

A \$75 million increase for K-12 teacher salaries is also included in the bill, for a total compensation

package of \$248 million. This funding supports the State's effort to boost teacher salaries from 42nd to 25th in the nation.

Early Childhood

This will be the second year of funding for the statewide voluntary pre-school education program, which will receive an additional \$15 million. Schools that received first year funding will now be in a preschool allowable growth formula. Empowerment programs receive approximately \$30 million for services that include birth to three, early childhood, and other preschool programs.

ATV and Snowmobile Funds Repaid

This year, the Legislature fulfilled a commitment to repay the ending balances of the snowmobile fund and the all-terrain vehicle (ATV) fund that were scooped back in 2002 to help balance the state budget through a difficult deficit. Every year since then, these two groups have requested the Legislature restore their monies.

The money comes directly from the snowmobile and ATV users through their registration fees. The groups use these funds

for new parks, trails, groomers, and upkeep of existing parks and trails. It is also used to leverage any federal dollars for these purposes.

House File 2662, which Governor Culver signed into law, restores these ending balances. On July 1, 2008, \$950,000 will be repaid to the snowmobile fund and \$775,000 to the ATV fund.

Back in 2002, user registrations were every two years. This allowed for a large ending balance because the clubs who use these moneys budgeted their activities for

a two-year period. At that time, they were saving their money to buy equipment and land, and provide maintenance for their parks and trails. Then their money was scooped.

Because of this diversion of money in 2002, the Legislature changed their registrations in 2004 to an annual registration to allow the clubs to better manage their money.

Housing Trust Fund Attains Long-Term Commitment

Senate File 2432 increases funding to the State Housing Trust Fund (SHTF), in the fiscal year 2009 budget, by \$500,000. The bill also provides a long term commitment to the program from the real estate transfer tax starting in fiscal year 2010. The state trust fund provides assistance to local housing trust funds for affordable housing projects.

The fund helps ensure decent, safe and affordable housing for

Iowans through two important programs. The Local Housing Trust Fund Program received 60 percent of the SHTF allocation to provide grants for communities, counties and organizations that wish to create a local housing trust fund. The remaining 40 percent goes to the Project-Based Housing Program that aids the development and rehabilitation of single-family and multifamily housing.

As signed by the Governor, Senate File 2432 includes an allocation from the real estate transfer tax to provide long-term funding for the State Housing Trust Fund. The real estate transfer tax is collected by the county recorder every time a property worth more than \$500 changes title, and documents are filed with the county recorder. The tax is 80 cents for every \$500, or fractional part, from the sale of the property.

Each month, the county recorder pays to the Iowa Treasurer 82.75% from the tax that is collected, retaining 17.25%. Of the amount sent to the state, 5% currently goes to the Shelter Assistance Program, and 95% goes to the general fund of the state. Senate File 2432 will now direct part of the general fund dollars to SHTF. This will not increase the

real estate transfer tax. By 2013, this will provide an additional \$3 million to SHTF.

A long-term commitment to the state housing trust fund, not subject to budget cuts, has been a goal of housing advocates for several years. It should also help in establishing local housing trust funds, since it shows a state commitment to the program.

Funding for the Shelter Assistance Program was not increased, although this program may be addressed next session. The Shelter Assistance Program provides funding for the emergency homeless shelters and domestic violence shelters. Those shelters are also federally funded.

Transportation Commission Approves RISE Grants

The Iowa Department of Transportation Commission approved four Revitalize Iowa's Sound Economy (RISE) grants at the May commission meeting. The commission approved grants for Iowa County, Clarke County, the city of Boone, and the city of Newton.

Iowa County

The Commission approved a grant of \$629,671 to Iowa County for grading and paving an access road east from 38th Avenue and constructing turning lanes on Iowa 220 at the intersection of 38th Avenue and at the south entrance of the proposed ALB-GOLD/Bionade facility. This RISE project will provide access to 66 acres for future industrial development as well

as the ALG-GOLD/Bionade facility.

Clark County

The Commission approved \$264,000 for Clarke County to construct 1,800 feet of new roadway from U.S. 69 west to Iowa 152 north of Osceola. The project will provide access to a proposed Southern Iowa Bioenergy biodiesel facility north of Osceola. The development will allow traffic going to the plant to avoid driving through Osceola. The facility will help support the creation of 44 new jobs over 2 years with average hourly wage of \$17.40.

Boone

The Commission approved \$725,900 for the city of Boone for construction of 1,830 feet of new

roadway east of Snedden Drive in the Airport Industrial Park. The project will provide access to the site of a proposed new Gates Corporation facility that will result in the retention of 195 existing jobs and the creation of 28 new jobs. This will be the first development in the Airport Industrial Park.

Newton

The Commission approved \$630,000 to the city of Newton for construction of 2,150 feet of East Eighth Street N. south of N.19th Avenue E. The improvements will provide access for Trinity Structural Towers. Trinity builds towers for wind turbines. The project will help to create 140 new jobs and more than \$21.4 million in associated capital investments.

Utility Board Office Building Discussed

The Capitol Planning Commission heard a presentation from the Iowa Utilities Board (IUB) on the new building for the board and the Office of Consumer Advocate. The Iowa Utilities Board updated the commission on the new building, including an update on the artist selection and proposed site concepts for the building.

Judy Cooper, Executive Secretary and Project Manager, discussed the process of artist selection for the building. She stated that the IUB initially reviewed 27

artist submissions and narrowed the submissions to 12 artists. From the field of 12 artists, the IUB chose 2 finalists to interview. From those two finalists, the IUB choose Jennifer Madden of the Reed Madden firm. Madden has worked both outdoors and indoors, and it is still open where art will be featured in the new building. It is also undecided whether the artist will work on only one piece or on multiple pieces.

Representatives from IUB spoke about the site concepts for

the building. The intent is for the building to be LEED Platinum certified. Because of this high level of LEED certification, building orientation is vitally important. IUB then presented several building locations on the capitol complex, ultimately advocating for a location on the north section of the IUB's allocated area on the capitol complex. The IUB noted that this location has a good view of the Capitol and best utilizes the contours of the land allocated to the IUB.

Governor Signs “Bouncer Bill”

Governor Culver signed into law House File 901, known as the “bouncer bill,” on May 12. The bill requires at least one person, employed by a bar or nightclub, to be trained in special security techniques.

Under House File 901, a pilot project is established in Polk County that requires bars and taverns with an occupancy of at least 200, and that charge a cover charge of at least \$5.00, to employ at least one person trained in security techniques.

The training covers techniques for safely removing people from the premises, de-escalation, use of force, anger management, civil rights, and recognition of fake IDs. The training course will be conducted by the Labor Commissioner and a \$50 fee may be charged to those taking the training.

The pilot project sunsets June 30, 2011. A report is due to the Legislature on January 1, 2011, concerning the effectiveness of the pilot project and any recommenda-

tions for legislative action to either expand or modify the pilot project.

The bill is a result of the death of Charles Lovelady a few years ago. Mr. Lovelady was asked to leave a bar, even though he had been admitted and was in the establishment for a period of time, because he was wearing a “hoodie”, a shirt with a hood attached to it. Mr. Lovelady died as the result of the actions of the security personnel.

Commission on Native American Affairs Created

A Commission on Native American Affairs is established under Senate File 2400, a bill which has now been signed by the Governor. In signing the bill, Governor Culver said that establishment of this “new commission will show all Iowans that we as a state respect this heritage.”

The newly created commission is under the Department of Human

Rights, along with other commissions which have been established over the years to ensure that every Iowan is equally protected and respected. The bill sets up an eleven-member commission appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate.

The purpose of the commission is to work with tribal governments, Native American groups,

and Native American persons in this state in the areas of human rights, access to justice, economic equality, and the elimination of discrimination.

Anyone interested in serving on this commission can apply by downloading a Boards and Commissions application at <http://openup.iowa.gov/boards/bc-resume.pdf>.