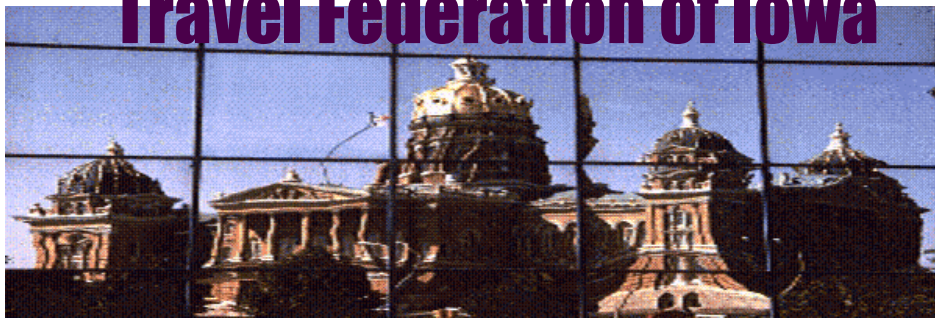


Travel Federation of Iowa



LET'S TALK
TOURISM

Issue Seven – April 14, 2007

Capitol News

Tourism News

Important Bills

Capitol News

The legislative session is entering its final two weeks, the time when decisions are made on budgets, bills that have been moving along at a good pace die suddenly, and bills that were long dead get a second life. Anything goes in the final days of session, so it's a time to be on close watch.

While we are your eyes and ears at the Capitol, it doesn't mean you can't join in the fun! Remember that you can listen to live debate from your computer by going to: www.legis.state.ia.us/Audio/Audio.html. Not only can you listen debate as it is happening, and can also review amendments before they become available on paper at the Capitol!

Believe it or not, we have only two weeks left in the scheduled 110-day session. Legislators say they are on schedule to adjourn on Friday, April 27, the last day they receive pay for their work. They could go longer, but leaders say they will adjourn on time, if not earlier. We've heard that before, so don't bet the farm.

The tone inside the Capitol has been largely quiet recently as the Democrats and Republicans have spent a lot of time in separate strategy caucuses and committee meetings preparing for the end of the session and figuring out which bills need to get done before adjournment. The quiet did dissipate temporarily this week, however, when Senate Republicans voted mostly together to defeat Governor Culver's nominee for the Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety, Gene Meyer. A number of House Republicans and public safety organizations have come out in support of Meyer. Many predicted that the Senate Republicans would try to block one of the Regents nominees; most people in the Capitol were surprised that they had a problem with Meyer.

It is unknown at this point what the Governor will do about the situation. He has a few options at his disposal, including asking the Senate to take another vote on Meyer as well as appointing Meyer during the interim (by waiting until the Legislature completes its business for 2007 and appointing him after that). An interim appointment would be valid until next session when the Senate would need to vote again on Meyer.

Otherwise, the Democratic leadership reports being pleased with their progress this year. The party controls the Governor's office and both Chambers of the Legislature for the first time since the 1960s and they released last week a list of accomplishments they are touting for 2007. The list includes increasing teacher pay to 25th in the nation, higher levels of education funding, anti-bullying

legislation, increasing the minimum wage, lifting the ban on stem cell research, raising the cigarette tax, health insurance pooling for small businesses, and cracking down on car-title loan companies.

Finally, another gubernatorial first – this week, Governor Culver vetoed his first bill since taking office. The bill was SF 139 which eliminated the ability of a person convicted of a simple misdemeanor to file a post-conviction application. Don't really know what that all means, but legislators say they will accept the veto and won't attempt to override it.

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Tourism News

Money, Dinero, L'Argent, Das Geld

The word is out now, but in case you didn't hear, Mike Tramentina changed job titles this week from "Acting Director" to "Director" of the Department of Economic Development. Tramentina had previously served as the Director of the Iowa Finance Authority and Iowa Department of Management under former Governor Tom Vilsack.

If lawmakers get their way, Tramentina will have a budget next year that is 8% larger than the current year, including a tourism budget that will grow 7%!

The Economic Development Budget ([SF 562](#)) is one step away from its journey to the Governor's desk. Last week, the House Appropriations Committee gave the Economic Development Budget a "thumbs up," moving it to the House Floor for debate. Legislators expect a quick and easy debate, and swift passage to the Governor's desk.

This is good news because there is a bump for Iowa's tourism budget in the bill – a \$250,000 increase. And for the first time, the Tourism Office appropriation is earmarked, so that it must be used for the intended (tourism) purpose.

Iowa: Open for Filmmaking

While there has been plenty of talk about making Iowa a more attractive place to filmmakers, the Iowa House of Representatives was the first to make a move on the bill creating a comprehensive Film, Television, and Video Project Promotion Program ([HF 892](#)). The bill is designed to develop a sustainable film industry here in the heartland.

Interested filmmakers can register with the program and, if they meet certain requirements, be eligible for a variety of tax incentives related to the production of their film in Iowa. The bill, which still needs Senate approval, was originally developed by Rep. Mark Davitt of Indianola, but has steadily gained bipartisan, bi-chamber support.

As Speaker of the House Pat Murphy commented this week, "The long term effects of tourism to a community have been a somewhat unexpected byproduct of the film industry in Iowa. There are still 65,000 people annually that visit the *Field of Dreams* in Dyersville, which includes 200 to 300 buses. It was most recently featured on CBS news and ESPN. *The Bridges of Madison County* area receives 50-75 bus tours with 50 people per bus, annually. At the peak, there were 300 bus tours in one year. These visitors have helped support hotels and

restaurants and spurred local economies. It is estimated that *The Final Season*, recently filmed in Cedar Rapids, and *The Hideout*, shot in Davenport, each contributed \$1 million to local economies."

Fix May Not Be In for Tourism Fix Bill

It's always a fear – the "easy" bill gets set aside because it is "no big deal." Then it gets lost in the shuffle. We are afraid that if the tourism fix bill doesn't move in the next week that may very well be its fate. Our "simple" little bill, which has no opposition, has been languishing on the House Calendar, ready for debate now for more than a month. It is one step away from the Governor!

Our tourism fix bill ([HF 616](#) & [SF 302](#)) will allow the Iowa Tourism Office to begin using the tourism marketing money allocated last year right away *this year* as intended, instead of waiting until the end of the year, in 2008. The bill should have been moving by now, but it has gotten hung up on the House Calendar.

Contact Your Legislators

While some things are moving along smoothly and others are hung up, now is the time to step back in the fray and make a few calls just to make sure everything moves along as planned.

Please contact your legislators this week with the following messages:

1. **Ask your Representatives to pass HF 616/SF 302** (both on the House Calendar) – and get it down to the Governor this week! Thank them for their support in making this fix.
2. **THANK your Senators for the \$250,000 increase for tourism marketing** in the Economic Development Budget ([SF 562](#)).
3. **THANK your Representatives for the \$250,000 increase for tourism marketing** in the Economic Development Budget ([SF 562](#)), and ask them to make sure it stays in the bill during final debate in the House.

SENATE SWITCHBOARD: (515) 281-3371

HOUSE SWITCHBOARD: (515) 281-3221

MORE INFO. ON LEGISLATORS:

www.legis.state.ia.us/asp/Legislators/LegislatorInfo.aspx

TO FIND WHO YOUR LEGISLATORS ARE:

www.legis.state.ia.us/FindLeg/

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BILLS OF INTEREST

An updated bill list has been attached to this report.

2007 Top Tourism Priorities

1. Increase the Iowa Tourism Office's budget to the Midwest regional average of \$8.3 million. Iowa's current budget of \$3,442,000 is not even half of the Midwest regional average.
2. Maintain a traditional school year calendar.
3. We encourage local interest groups to consider what will best serve the industry in their location and encourage them to advocate for those issues.

Important 2007 Dates

- **Friday, April 27, 2007:** Final Day of Session (that is, final PAID day of session – legislators can go on as long as they like, they just won't be paid for their work anymore)
- **Friday, April 27, 2007** – While your lobbyists are toiling away and grumpy under the golden dome, we hope that you all are kicking it up and having a great time at **TOURISM UNITY DAY** at the Hy Vee Conference Center in West Des Moines.

Your Advocacy Toolkit:

[Find Your Legislator](#)

[Legislative Committee Listings](#)

[Listen to Debate \(live\)](#)

[Session Calendar](#)

[Guide to the General Assembly](#)

[Forums/Roundtables](#)

[Contact Your Legislator](#)

[Track Legislation \(instantly updated\)](#)

[House & Senate Calendars \(weekly & daily\)](#)

[How a Bill Becomes a Law](#)

[List of Local Public Legislative](#)

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