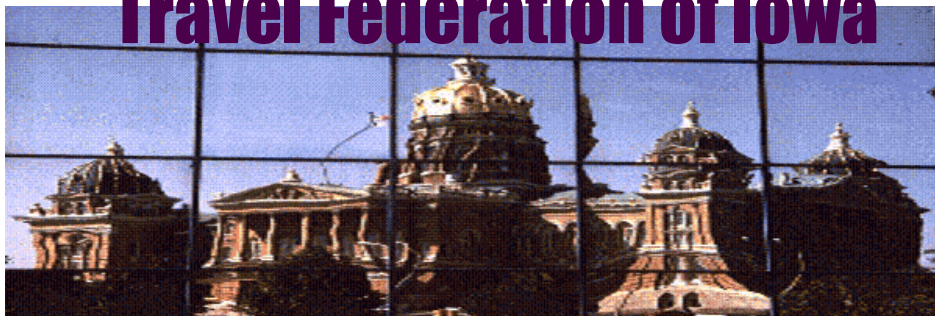


Travel Federation of Iowa



LET'S TALK
TOURISM

Issue Seven – April 18, 2006

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News from the Capitol Steps

Today is the 100th day of the Legislative Session, and it is supposed to be the last one. It is unlikely the session will adjourn this week, let alone today. We were not going to publish another TFI Legislative Report until the end of session, but since they are going long, we thought we should send out a very quick update to let you know the status of TFI priorities.

As you have likely read, it's been an interesting two weeks. There was a leadership coup in the Senate Republican caucus, with Sen. Mary Lundby emerging as the state's first woman Senate Co-Majority Leader. It was a close vote in the caucus, we've heard that Sen. Larry McKibben lost by one vote, with one Senator abstaining (rumor has it that Sen. Stew Iverson refused to vote on his replacement, and therefore abstained).

This combined with the Governor being out of the country for the last week and the daily hearings and investigations into the workforce development (CITEC) scandal, has made it difficult for leaders to negotiate the budget and plan for adjournment. Right now, the keys to the end of session and the final negotiations are in the hands of legislative leaders and the Governor.

It's easy now for citizens to give up – they think the deals are struck and they've made their calls. However, now is the BEST time to act. Calls from back home are about the best way to make sure things stay on track. So if you think you've bugged your legislators all you can, find two or three others to make the calls and send emails. Bug them until the gavel falls!

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Status of Tourism Priorities

Things continue to look good for Iowa's tourism industry as we enter the final days of session. While we are certainly far from a clean sweep, it does look like tourism funding will be increased significantly and the school start date discussion is still in the mix, although a bit less likely to happen when all is said and done.

- ✓ **The Economic Development Budget (HF 2459)** is ready for Senate debate – it's been sitting on the calendar waiting for the final budget deal to be struck. The budget includes an additional earmarked \$250,000 for tourism marketing. These additional dollars are a separate line-item appropriation to the Office of Tourism.
- ✓ **Regional tourism marketing will get a dedicated funding stream from gambling dollars if HF 2791 continues to gain momentum.** Currently on the House Calendar, the bill has broad support in the House and growing support in the Senate. The bill dedicates 1% of the gambling revenues to community foundations in the 84 counties without gambling (80%), community cultural grants (\$260,000), and Department of Cultural Affairs operational support grants (\$260,000), with the remaining funds split between regional tourism marketing (about \$900,000) and Endow Iowa tax credits (about \$900,000). Once passed, the appropriations will be automatic each year and do not require legislative action.
- ✓ **The School Start Date debate is not over yet, even though the bill is being held up (SF 2272).** The issue is now in the hands of the legislators negotiating the Education Compromise. The compromise on the school start date seems reasonable to many legislators, but some still want to give Iowa's school districts more flexibility in setting their calendars. The compromise sets a firm start date of August 25, with no start date waivers allowed except as permitted under the innovative or year-round school waiver.
- ✓ **No new movement on Property Tax Reform (HSB 766)** but it is still being discussed in the context of the end of session negotiations. Legislators are well aware of the problems the essential services provisions in the bill would create in local communities, especially as they relate to tourism, trails, parks, libraries, etc.

Remember, now is the time legislators need to hear from you. If you feel like you are wearing out your welcome with your legislators, find two or three others in your community to make the calls or send the emails. Legislators want to get back out on the campaign trail, and they want to brag to their constituents about all they did for their communities. Let's make sure they do these things for our communities – and our tourism industry.

Representatives can be reached at: 515-281-3221

For your Representative's email: www.legis.state.ia.us/asp/Legislators/HouseEmail.aspx

Senators can be reached at: 515-281-3371

For your Senator's email: www.legis.state.ia.us/asp/Legislators/HouseEmail.aspx

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Bills of Interest

See attached chart.

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2006 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 2006 Dates to Know:

- **April 18th, 2006 - 100th Calendar Day of the 2006 legislative session.** Per Diems for legislators expire, usually signaling the end of the session.
- **April 28th, 2006 - Iowa Tourism Unity Day.** H-yVee Conference Center, West Des Moines.

Your Advocacy Toolkit:

[Find Your Legislator](#)

[Contact Your Legislator](#)

[Legislative Committee Listings](#)

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

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

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

[Session Calendar](#)

[How a Bill Becomes a Law](#)

[TFI Fast Facts & Legislative Talking Points](#)

[Guide to the General Assembly](#)

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