

# Travel Federation of Iowa

## **Capitol News**

Not even the weather could keep people from the Capitol this week. The rotunda was filled daily with people representing grocers, childcare providers, foster parents and children, insurance representatives, counties, domestic violence prevention advocates, anti-smoking groups, and business organizations. On Thursday, legislators hosted a Black History Month celebration with the Des Moines-based dance group “The Isiserettes” and their drum crew. Needless to say, it’s been crowded and loud. Many people ask, “Is it always this loud in here?” The answer is a resounding yes!

## **More Retirement News**

Another legislator has announced his plans to retire this year. Rep. Phil Wise, a Democrat from Keokuk, announced he would not run for re-election this year. Rep. Wise decided to end his public service this year when he finishes his 13<sup>th</sup> term in the Iowa Legislature, becoming the 13<sup>th</sup> member to announce retirement. Two other House members plan to make a run for the Senate, so there will be 15 open seats in this Fall’s election. Legislators still have a couple more weeks to decide before they file their candidate papers.

## **Working Together?**

It is true that most bills pass out of the House and Senate unanimously. Only a handful of bills are ever truly controversial. That said, it is rare to find a bill with all 100 House members listed as sponsors. This week, the House introduced a bill to exempt your federal tax rebate (coming sometime this summer) from state income taxes. The Federal government is planning to return some of the money people have paid in taxes in hopes that it will stimulate the economy. The rebate is \$600/person or \$1200/couple, with an additional \$300 per child. Those making over \$150,000 annually will not receive the full rebate, and only people paying taxes will receive the rebate. Typically, this would be taxed by the state as income, but this bill will make your rebates tax-free.

## **Going Up in Smoke**

Last year, the Governor successfully passed a tobacco tax increase. Now legislators are considering a stack of bills that will limit where a person can smoke. Some of these bills ban smoking within 50 feet of a school or day care facility, some give cities and counties the ability to adopt local smoking bans, and others put a statewide ban on smoking in all public places.

This week, the House passed the “Smokefree Workplace Act” ([HF 2212](#)), making it illegal to smoke in any public place. You will still be able to smoke in casinos, private clubs, your house or car, designated rooms in hotels/motels, and tobacco stores. Several legislators tried to make the ban apply to casinos, but lost the vote 43-51. The bill itself passed 56-44. The bill’s floor manager Rep. Tyler Olson (D-Cedar Rapids) said the bill protects “99% rather than 0%” of Iowans. You can see how your legislators voted on the bill [here](#) (the casino amendment vote was not a record vote, so you are not able to see how your legislators voted).

Opponents of the statewide ban would rather see local control, and say a statewide ban is unfair to small businesses. One opponent noted that if the bill was supposed to be a health care protection bill, it should include casinos. They added that the state was protecting its revenues, not public health. (The state gets a large cut of those gambling dollars – and tourism receives a percentage off the top!)

### **Growing Iowa's Silicone Valley**

Last year, legislators passed a bill giving Google (the highly successful Internet search engine) special tax breaks to locate one of their "server farms" in Iowa, leading to huge investment and new high-paying technology jobs. This year, legislators are working hard to attract Microsoft, which is building its own server network around the country. Legislators passed [HF 2233](#), which would give Microsoft the same tax breaks given to Google, if they invest \$200 million in Iowa and create new high-wage jobs.

### **Bottle Bill Breaks**

Governor Culver is ending his push to get legislators to consider his proposed expansion of the state's bottle deposit law. Governor Culver proposed increasing the bottle deposit to ten cents (keeping two cents of it for environmental programs and for retailers, and giving people back only eight cents). Governor Culver said, "I understand Iowans have concerns about not getting their full deposit back, and I recognize we need to come up with another way to meet our goals while ensuring Iowans get their full deposit."

Legislators have also said they are not interested in the Governor's second revenue generating idea either – combined corporate reporting. Legislators are concerned that closing the tax loopholes for corporations headquartered out of state could have a negative impact on economic development. The bottle bill would have brought in an estimated \$30 million more, and combined corporate reporting would have generated another \$75 million. Without those revenue enhancements, legislators will have to come in well under the Governor's proposal in order to balance the budget.

### **State Auditor Gives Governor's Budget Mixed Review**

Every year, the state auditor reviews the Governor's budget and gives his expert advice on whether it is balanced and based on sound accounting. This year State Auditor David Vaudt (who is an elected official) said "While the Governor's Fiscal Year 2009 budget proposal makes significant progress in enhancing clarity, reducing the spending gap, and lowering spending growth, it sets Iowa up for some difficult challenges in the following fiscal year."

Auditor Vaudt cited the Governor's use of special funds to balance the budget as a problem (primarily spending all of the remaining money in the Senior Living Trust Fund), leaving a \$193 million hole in the budget in 2010. He also said that the Governor's use of bonding (borrowing money) to pay for a new prison means "taxpayers will pay for decades to come."

Finally, Auditor Vaudt said that the Governor's spending still exceeded the rate of growth in the state – 16% growth in state spending over two years while state revenues are growing only at 12%.

Legislators decided this week that their budget will be 2% under the Governor's recommendation. Which brings us to the budget...

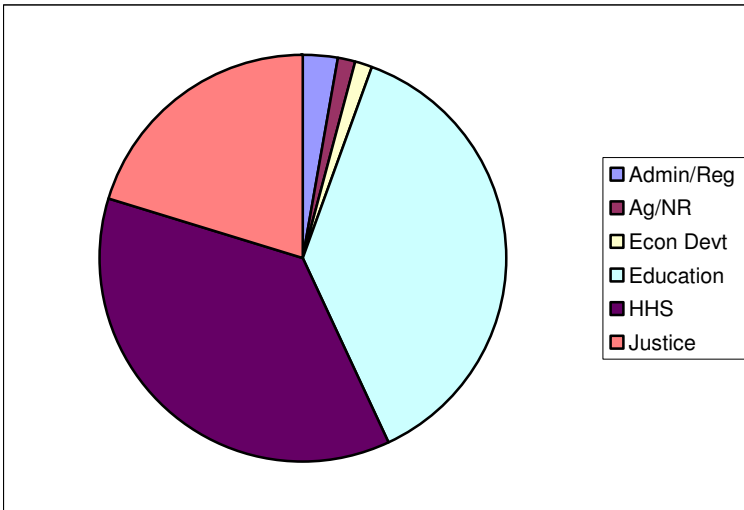
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## **Budget News**

The biggest news this week was the announcement of the Legislature's "budget targets." Basically, the majority party's leaders in the House and Senate decide how much they want to spend this year in the budget, if they will increase taxes to add revenue, and how big each budget area's piece of the pie will be. The budget subcommittees then take that "target" and divide it up among various programs, services, and agencies in funded through their budget. The overall budget target tells the budget subcommittee how much money they are allowed to spend – but the real decisions still rest with them.

The announcement of the budget targets last week means legislators will be getting serious about the budget and start to make decisions. Here is a quick look at the budget targets for the next fiscal year (fiscal year 2009):

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### Administration & Regulation

*Funds things like regulation of nursing homes and care facilities and state agencies like the Dept. of Personnel.*

Current Budget (FY 2008): \$96,299,857  
 Budget Target (FY 2009): \$95,604,847  
 Difference: \$695,000 less

### Agriculture & Natural Resources

*Funds various agricultural and environmental programs, including funding for state parks.*

Current Budget (FY 2008): \$43,638,037  
 Budget Target (FY 2009): \$43,403,037  
 Difference: \$235,000 less

### Economic Development

*Funds tourism programs, cultural and arts programs, and workforce programs.*

Current Budget (FY 2008): \$42,656,535  
 Budget Target (FY 2009): \$40,836,535  
 Difference: \$1,820,000 less

### Education

*Funds community colleges, the three state universities, Braille & Sightsaving School, School for the Deaf, public libraries, and school programs.*

Current Budget (FY 2008): \$1,182,758,943  
 Budget Target (FY 2009): \$1,242,961,558  
 Difference: \$60,202,615 more

### Health & Human Services

*Funds Medicaid, child welfare system, programs for older and aging lowans, services to persons with disabilities, and assistance to low-income families.*

Current Budget (FY 2008): \$1,169,210,414  
 Budget Target (FY 2009): \$1,207,615,634  
 Difference: \$38,405,220 more

### Justice System

*Funds the state's prisons, community-based corrections, and court system.*

Current Budget (FY 2008): \$670,688,353  
 Budget Target (FY 2009): \$669,739,630  
 Difference: \$948,723 less

As you can see, education and health/human services remain priorities for the legislators in charge this year (they are the only areas getting increases), largely because the costs in them are not as controllable as in other areas. States are required by Federal law to pay for entitlement programs, which tend to be in those two budget areas (Medicaid, public schools, etc).

Another thing you will notice – legislators decided not to base their budgets on the Governor's recommendations. Instead, they are using the current year's budget (FY 2008) as their starting point. That means anything in the

Governor's budget is not in the baseline, and anyone wanting to add it in will have to give a compelling case, and then find cuts in the budget to make room.

The economic development budget does not look good. The \$1.8 million cut will be difficult to absorb without real cuts, and that might mean tourism will take a hit. At the same time, Iowa Workforce Development is losing millions in Federal funding and had hoped to get additional state funds in order to make up or reduce the impact of those cuts.

Now is a very good time to talk to your legislators, and encourage them to avoid cutting proven, revenue-generating programs like Iowa's tourism marketing. You can contact your legislators through TFI's Voter Voice system ([www.travelfederationofiowa.org](http://www.travelfederationofiowa.org)) or by calling Senators at 515-281-3371, and Representatives at 515-281-3221.

Another excellent way to "Talk Tourism" is to attend a local legislative forum, typically hosted by chambers of commerce or local libraries. Find one near you here: [http://www.infonetiowa.com/advocate/local\\_forums.php](http://www.infonetiowa.com/advocate/local_forums.php).

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## **Tourism News**

Legislators get their ideas for bills from other states, colleagues in other states, lobbyists and advocates for groups, and constituents they talk to on the campaign trail. We get our ideas for writing this report from a lot of sources too, but we like to give credit where credit is due! The following article is from Rep. Steve Lukan's newsletter. Rep. Lukan, a Republican from Manchester, has been a strong tourism supporter and pushed for tourism funding with his leaders since being elected in 2002.

### ***Farmers Get Creative to Attract Tourist Dollars***

Some farmers around the state are opening their doors to visitors as a way to bolster their income. Many of Iowa's wineries have been successful in attracting visitors to their sites. However, there are traditional farmers also moving in that direction as a way to boost their sales and supplement their incomes.

Some of Iowa's farmers are adapting their farms to welcome visitors who want that authentic rural experience. There are a handful of farmers in Iowa who offer farm stays, which treat the farm almost as a destination park for the mainly urban visitors. The visitors have a range of experience from observing milking of cows, to helping with morning chores, to riding horses.

There are benefits to the farmers as well. Some of the improvements to the farm can be tax deductible. In addition, some farmers have noted that visitor's to their farm builds loyalty to their brand. They are seeing their visitor number increase along with the number of customers buying their products.

These farmers feel like they still have room to grow this niche industry. Unlike neighboring states, there is no coordinated effort to market these "agritourism" immersion experiences. However, a coalition of these farmers is hoping to make a more coordinated effort in the future to attract more interest to their operations. In the meantime many of them are making their own marketing efforts to attract visitors to the farm experience.

In the future we will likely see more marketing of these agritourism experiences. From the bed and breakfast on a farm to tourists sampling some of the great food products produced here. Tourism in Iowa grew overall last year, and these creative farmers will continue to work on tapping into that potential revenue.

## **Deadline Approaching**

The first deadline for bills is coming up on March 7, so your next Capitol Report will show you the bills that will remain eligible for debate (and the ones legislators decided to let “die” for the year). With nearly 2,000 bills introduced each year, legislators had to come up with a way to narrow their focus as the session moved along. What they came up with was a deadline system (called “Funnels”), where bills have to make it through certain steps in the legislative process by certain times in order to remain eligible for debate. In other words, they go in the top of a funnel, and only a small amount make it out of the bottom.

When a bill is introduced, it is assigned to a committee. By March 7, bills will have to be voted out of these committees to make it through the “funnel” deadline. So if you see bills you care about – make sure you tell your legislators, or they may die in the first funnel. Bills that spend money or deal with taxes are not subject to the funnel, and can be debated at any time during the session.

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## **Important Bills for Tourism Professionals**

### **HOUSE BILLS**

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**[HF 2006](#) & [SF 2144](#) **Special Destination Park Deer Hunting License** - Allows the DNR director to issue 500 nonresident deer hunting licenses for hunting in destination parks. The purpose of the special nonresident licenses is to allow the promotion of state parks that are designated destination parks. *House Natural Resources Committee; Rep. Davitt (Chair), Arnold & Reichert; Sen. Dearden (Chair), Black & Gaskill***

**[HF 2080](#) - Donated Property for Conservation/Tax Credits** - Gives people or companies who donate land for conservation a tax credit in the amount of 50% of the fair market value of the property, up to \$100,000. The credit may be carried forward for twenty years. Effective 1/1/2008. *House Floor; Rep. Frevert (Floor Manager)*

**[HF 2112](#) - DNR Dam & Lake Restoration** - Appropriates \$100,000 from RIIF (gaming) for dam restoration and lake maintenance in Delaware County. *House Appropriations Committee; Rep. Cohoon (Chair), Huseman & Reichert*

**[HF 2130](#) - River Water Trail** - Appropriates \$100,000 from RIIF (gaming dollars) for infrastructure improvements for a river water trail located in Jones County. *House Appropriations Committee; Rep. Cohoon (Chair), Huseman & Reichert*

**[HF 2194](#) - Minimum Wage Code Update** - This bill replaces minimum wage requirement exemptions in the Code that are tied to the federal Fair Labor Standards Act. Currently, the Code adopts by reference exemptions to the federal Fair Labor Standards Act which were in place when Iowa's minimum wage law was enacted in 1989, but which were repealed from the United States Code on November 17, 1989. The federal provision allowed a retail or service establishment to pay employees engaged in certain services less than the federal minimum wage if more than 50 percent of the establishment's annual dollar volume of sales of goods or services is made in the state in which the establishment is located and 75 percent of whose annual dollar volume of sales of goods or services is not for resale. The bill provides that the state's minimum wage requirements do not apply to an enterprise whose annual gross volume of sales or business done, exclusive of excise taxes at the retail level which are separately stated, is less than \$300,000, unless the enterprise is engaged in the business of laundering, cleaning, or repairing clothing or fabrics; is engaged in construction or reconstruction; is engaged in the operation of hospitals, facilities serving the elderly or persons with mental or physical illnesses or disabilities, or educational institutions; or is a public agency. *Senate Labor & Business Relations Committee; Sen. Ward (Chair), Kettering & Seng*

**[HF 2244](#) - Forest Reservation Exemption** - This bill limits to 10 acres the amount of forest reservation for which a property tax exemption may be granted. The bill also provides that an owner of a forest reservation is limited to one forest reservation exemption in the county. The bill takes effect upon enactment and applies to forest reservation exemptions granted before, on, or after the effective date. *House Ways & Means Committee; Rep. Thomas (Chair), Deyoe & Quirk*

**[HF 2262](#) - Sales Tax Refund Districts** - This bill permits cities to designate sales tax refund districts within their downtown areas where newly located retail businesses would be allowed to provide refunds of state sales tax. To designate an area as a sales tax refund district, a city would need to enact an ordinance delineating the boundaries of the area and specifying the length of time the district would be in existence, not to exceed 10 years. Only retail businesses locating in the sales tax refund district after the area was designated could get sales tax refunds. *House Ways & Means Committee; Rep. Jochum (Chair), Schueller & Soderberg*

**[HF 2276](#) - Water Trails from CAT** - The bill would require every year that the first \$4M of Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) Funds would be allocated to provide assistance to cities and counties for the development of water trails and parks on the rivers and streams of the state. The remaining monies in CAT would be allocated under the same rules that are currently used for the program. *House Economic Growth Committee; Rep. D. Olson (Chair), Staed & Wiencek*

**[HF 2316](#) - Stone State Park Trail** - Authorizes an appropriation for the development and completion of a recreational trail to be built from the entrance to Stone state park and continuing south along state highway 12 for a distance of one and one-eighth miles. The funding is appropriated from the rebuild Iowa infrastructure fund from funds not otherwise appropriated. *House Appropriations Committee; Not yet assigned*

**[HF 2323](#) - Historical Court Record Preservation** - Requires the clerk of the district court to consult with a recognized county historical society or association prior to the destruction of a court file to ensure the preservation of and public access to such records. *House Judiciary Committee; Not yet assigned*

**[HF 2341](#) - School Start Date Waiver Elimination** - Eliminates the Department of Education's unlimited authority to approve school districts' requests to waive the earliest school start date requirement. The bill limits the department to issuing waivers to not more than three school districts and to issue the waivers only to school districts conducting educational research. A school district must include in its application the scope and objectives of the educational research to be conducted. Currently, the school year can begin no sooner than a day during the calendar week in which the first day of September falls, or, if the first day of September falls on a Sunday, on a day during the calendar week which immediately precedes the first day of September. School districts currently are granted waivers authorizing an earlier start date if the director of the department of education determines that a starting date on or after the earliest starting date would have a significant negative educational impact. *House Education Committee; Not yet assigned*

**[HF 2357](#) - Beer Sales in Wineries** - This bill would allow a native winery to be issued a class "C" beer permit to sell beer to consumers for off-premises consumption. Current law provides that only grocery or pharmacy may be issued a class "C" beer permit. *House State Government Committee; Not yet assigned*

**[SF 2208](#) - Forest Reservation Limit** - This bill limits to 10 acres the amount of forest reservation for which a property tax exemption may be granted. The bill also provides that an owner of a forest reservation is limited to one forest reservation exemption in the county. *Senate Natural Resources & Environment Committee; Sen. Bolkcom (Chair), Kettering & Schoenjahn*

**[HSB 557](#) - DED Changes** - This bill makes a number of changes affecting the administration of the department of economic development. The bill allows the DED director to appoint a designee to serve on the vision Iowa board and

allows the DED to use funds from the renewable fuel infrastructure fund to market its renewable fuel programs. The bill limits the tax credits available to investors in film projects to 25 percent of a project's qualified expenditures in the state. The bill directs the department, in coordination with other state and local entities, to develop and market a new tourism program to create new, and promote existing, recreational and leisure opportunities in the state. The bill strikes a number of the department's existing reporting requirements and reconstitutes them instead under a different Code Section and standardizes the department's reporting requirements by providing for a single, consolidated annual report to the governor and the general assembly due by January 31 of each year. The bill allows the DED to contract with service providers for commercialization development services on a case-by-case basis, and it also authorizes the department to spend the additional moneys it recaptures from loan payments and federal economic stimulus funds provided it spends those moneys on the implementation of consultant recommendations for certain targeted industries. *House Economic Growth Committee; Rep. Thomas (Chair), Hoffman & Schueller*

**[HSB 569](#) & [SF 2176](#) Cultural Affairs Changes** - Requires the Historical Division of the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) create a digital collection of records for research purposes and make the collection available to the public. Requires DCA establish a statewide culture, history, arts, and tourism program, and to implement the program by creating regional committees for the coordination of cultural efforts. Establishes a Civil War Advisory Committee to help the Historical Division plan a sesquicentennial commemoration of Iowa's role in the American civil war. *House Economic Growth Committee; Rep. Helen Miller (Chair), Staed & Wiencek; Sens. Black (Floor Manager) Amendment: By Sen. Black: Takes out "Tourism" from the regions (because there are already tourism regions) and replaces it with "Teams" so that the CHAT acronym remains (Culture, History & Arts Teams).*

**[HSB 628](#) - TIME-21 Funding** - This bill would generate funds for deposit into the TIME-21 Fund to be used for transportation infrastructure through a variety of fee increases and adjustments. The bill would capture revenue increases from registration fees and would raise registration fees on 2010 or newer pick-up trucks to rates similar to SUVs and minivans. "Business trade trucks" would allowed to use a lower fee schedule and would require a IRS Schedule C or F form for proof. The bill would adjust fees and schedules for all passenger vehicles while ensuring that fees will not rise for a specific vehicle and owner until the owner changes vehicles. Fees for special trucks for farm use are increased, as well are title fees and salvage title fees. The bill also increases the fee charged for registration of trailers and contains several other changes. A revenue estimate of how much this bill would generate for TIME-21 will probably be available within the next few weeks. *House Transportation Committee; Rep. Huser (Chair), Lykam, Roberts & Tjepkes*

## SENATE BILLS

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**[SF 2001](#) - Sales Tax Exemption/Nonprofit Performing Arts** - Exempts the sale of materials and services used in the operation of a nonprofit private performing arts center from state sales tax, and allows sales tax paid on construction materials to build a nonprofit private performing arts center to be refunded (applies to construction contracts signed on or after 1/1/2005). *Senate Ways & Means Committee; Sen. Schmitz (Chair), Connolly & Ward*

**[SF 2044](#) - Truck Registration Fees** - This bill revises the method for calculating annual registration fees for motor trucks with an unladen weight of 7,500 pounds or less. Currently, most such trucks are registered based on combined gross weight for an annual fee of \$65, which is reduced to \$55 when the vehicle is more than 10 model years old, \$45 after 13 model years and \$35 after 15 model years. The bill requires that 2010 and subsequent model year motor trucks be registered under the weight and value system that applies to most passenger vehicles. Currently under that system, registration fees are equal to 1 percent of the value of the vehicle plus 40 cents for each 100 pounds of weight of the vehicle. Registration fees based on weight and value are automatically reduced according to the age of the vehicle beginning when the vehicle is more than five model years old. The bill does not alter the current flat fee schedule, which will continue to apply to 2009 and previous model year trucks. *Senate Transportation Committee; Not yet assigned*

**SF 2045 - School Start Date Change** - This bill changes, effective for the school year beginning July 1, 2009, the earliest school start date to August 25 and eliminates the authority of the director of the department of education to grant a request made by a board of directors of a school district to commence classes prior to the earliest starting date allowed, which currently is no sooner than a day during the calendar week in which the first day of September falls or, if the first day of September falls on a Sunday, a day during the prior week. The bill makes a conforming change to eliminate an exemption from aid reduction for early school starts, unless the exemption is for a school district approved to implement an innovative school year. Without the waiver, the school district's state aid payments are reduced by 1/180 for each day of that fiscal year for which the school district begins school before the earliest starting date allowed. *Senate Education Committee; Sen. Kreiman (Chair), Beall & Boettger*

**SF 2059 - State Historical Society & Lost Items** - Makes the State Historical Society responsible for administering the Iowa Heritage Fund. The bill also removes division III from Code chapter 304A, which contains an indemnification program for special exhibit items lost or damaged while on loan to nonprofit organizations or governmental entities in Iowa. *Sent to Governor;*

**SF 2105 & HF 2190 Hotel/Motel Tax Election** - Specifies the voters who are eligible to vote at an election to impose, repeal, or change the percentage rate of a hotel and motel tax. Under the bill, only registered voters of the city shall be permitted to vote for tax changes proposed only within city limits, and only registered voters of the unincorporated areas are permitted to vote for changes proposed only in unincorporated areas. *Senate Local Government Committee; Sen. Beall (Chair), Angelo & Heckroth*

**SF 2106 - New Gambling Moratorium** - This bill establishes a moratorium preventing the racing and gaming commission from issuing a new license to conduct gambling games on an excursion gambling boat, gambling structure, or at a pari-mutuel racetrack on and after January 1, 2008. The bill takes effect upon enactment and is retroactively applicable to January 1, 2008. *Senate State Government Committee; Sen. Kibbie (Chair), Behn & Danielson*

**SF 2178 & SSB 3057 & HSB 535 Endow Iowa Tax Credit Increase** - Increases the total annual tax credits allowed under the Endow Iowa program from \$2 million to \$3 million. Also reduces the annual percentage granted to an individual taxpayer from 5% to 3 1/3%. *Senate Ways & Means Committee; Sen. Stewart (Chair), Angelo & Dotzler; Rep. Wenthe (Chair), Anderson & Helen Miller*

**SSB 3058 - Tax Code Clean-Up** - Allows a privately owned library or art gallery being used for public purposes (and not for private profit) to receive a property tax exemption. Effective 7/1/2008. *Senate Ways & Means Committee; Sen. McCoy (Chair), Dotzler & Putney*

**SSB 3140 & HSB 636 Health Care for All (Universal Health Care)** - Implements many of the recommendations of the Affordable Health Care for Small Businesses, Families & Individuals Commission that met this summer. Five bills will be introduced to enact recommendations coming from that commission, but this bill contains the most controversial and comprehensive elements of those recommendations. Creates a Health Care Coverage Exchange to continue the work of the commission to ensure all Iowans have health insurance that is affordable, and recommend steps to make progress as funding becomes available. The Exchange is a new state agency, governed by an independent board of directors headed up by former Governors Branstad and Vilsack. The Exchange is to find a way to mandate children's health insurance by the end of 2009 (including enrolling all kids eligible for Medicaid and hawk-i, and through a new sliding fee scale assistance program). Beginning 2010, all parents will need to show proof of insurance for their kids. The Exchange is also to work on a mandate for individual health insurance coverage (requiring everyone have proof of coverage). Also sets up the structure to create a "medical home" to encourage more collaboration of health care providers, expand the use of telemedicine and electronic health records, and creates a new division in the Department of Public Health to expand access to information and improve consumer education.

*Senate Human Resources Committee; Sen. Hatch (Chair), Bolkcom, Ragan, Seymour & Johnson; Rep. Foege (Chair), Gayman & Heaton*

**SSB 3168 - Rail Right-Of-Way for Trails** - This bill provides for a corporate tax credit for owners of railroad rights-of-way that grant easements to the department of transportation, a county, or a city for purposes of constructing and maintaining a recreational trail. The agreement must provide for the amount of tax credit which equals a percentage of the property taxes paid by the owner on the right-of-way. The agreement must also specify the number of years the owner is entitled to the tax credit. The tax credit is refundable. The bill applies retroactively to January 1, 2008, for tax years beginning on or after that date. *Senate Ways & Means Committee; Sen. Dotzler (Chair), Seng & Putney*

**SSB 3194 - Governor's Health Care Reform Package** - Creates a public-private Electronic Health Information Commission to adopt a statewide health information plan by 1/1/2009, identify and integrate existing efforts into the plan in order to avoid duplication, work with public and private networks to build a backbone, promote the use of telemedicine, address workforce needs generated by increased use of health information technology, and identify state laws that may be barriers to creating this interoperable network. Requires all health care professionals use a patient identifier and continuity of care record (health care passport) by 1/1/2010. Creates the "Keep Iowa Health" fund to be used for community wellness initiatives or for distribution to county public health agencies for health care screenings, mental health services, and other county-based services to low-income Iowans. Creates a state income tax checkoff for wellness. Requires health insurers to cover an unmarried dependent child of an insured person until they are 25 years old or are no longer a college student. Requires insurance companies offering plans to small employers establish new rating systems for additional groupings to drive down premiums. Prohibits an insurance company from exempting any pre-existing conditions and no longer allows the pre-existing condition waiting period when changing insurance plans. Limits long-term care insurance rate increases to 12% annually, unless the financial condition of the insurer warrants that increase. *Senate Human Resources Committee; Sen. Hatch (Chair), Bolkcom, Ragan, Seymour & Johnson*

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## **2008 Top Tourism Priorities**

- ★ Increase the Iowa Tourism Office's budget to the Midwest regional average of \$8.3 million.
- ★ Maintain a traditional school year calendar.
- ★ Support infrastructure funding (Time 21).

## **Important 2008 Dates to Know:**

- ★ Friday, March 7, 2008: First "Funnel" deadline (bills must be voted out of committee of origin to stay alive)
- ★ Friday, March 28, 2008: Second "Funnel" deadline (bills must be voted out of either the House or Senate, and a committee in the other chamber to stay alive)
- ★ April 22, 2008: Final day of session (that is, the last day they get paid for being in session!)

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## **Your Advocacy Toolkit:**

[Find Your Legislator](#)

[Legislative Committee Listings](#)

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