

LET'S TALK TOURISM

Travel Federation of Iowa

Capitol News - #3 (February 15, 2009)

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Monday, February 16th will be the 36th day of the session. If you recall, the session was originally scheduled for 110 days and was shortened to 100 days in order to save money. This week, Senate Majority Leader Gronstal told some sources that his ambitious goal for adjournment is April 2nd, the 82nd day of the session! The Senator's ability to reach that goal will be dependent on several factors, one the biggest of which is whether they will be able to move up the date of the Revenue Estimating Conference's (REC) budget estimate. If they were able to pull off the 82-day session though, then we would be at the halfway point on Saturday, February 21st!

Along with the REC projection, the Legislature is waiting to see how much federal stimulus money will flow into the state. As a result of not having these two pieces of important information, there isn't much budget talk in the Capitol right now. Instead, legislators are focusing more on policy, hearing many different presentations and holding numerous subcommittees to review proposals.

Friday the 20th will be the last day that legislators can submit a bill request. They can introduce bills after that date as long as the request was submitted for drafting by the 20th. There have been 873 bills and resolutions introduced to date and this number grew much faster this past week than it did the weeks before.

Little Known Trivia

For those of you that are superstitious, there are two Friday the 13ths this session; Friday, March 13 is the day the March Revenue Estimates are announced and is the first funnel deadline, the day when bills need to be voted out of committee to remain viable for the rest of session. If at least one committee has acted on a bill by March 13, it's dead for the year.

Weather Works for TFI's Legislative Showcase!

After last year's horrific snowstorm during the Legislative Showcase, Mother Nature decided to grant TFI a good weather year for the Showcase which was head again at the Paul R. Knapp Animal Learning Center on the Iowa State Fairgrounds. Cold, but clear skies on February 3rd turned into a whopping turnout of legislators at the showcase - 70 of the 100 Representatives and 36 of the 50 Senators!

Gas Tax Proposals for Infrastructure

This week, three bills were introduced to increase the gas tax and use the proceeds strictly to fund infrastructure. [Senate File 128](#) was introduced by Senate President Kibbie and would increase the gas tax by nine cents. [Senate Study Bill 1182](#) and [House Study Bill 164](#) would raise the gas tax by a total of eight cents, four upon enactment and then four more on January 1, 2010. Subcommittees have already been scheduled for the latter two bills.

Whether or not the Legislature will have the votes to advance a gas tax increase remain unclear, and whether Governor Culver would sign such a bill is even more unclear. The Governor has contended that the Legislature should instead bond to create a \$700 million infrastructure fund that would be repaid by \$56 million per year from gaming revenues.

The Iowa League of Cities, the Iowa State Association of Counties (ISAC), the Iowa Bankers Association, the Professional Developers of Iowa, the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, the Associated General Contractors (AGC) of Iowa and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) are all registered in support of the gas tax increase, among others.

Take a moment to visit TFI's Grassroots Action Center at www.votervoicenet.com/groups/tfi and let your legislators know what you think of this initiative.

Bill Tracker

Campbell/Patterson Consulting LLP is pleased to present the new, web-based CPC Bill Tracker. It is a concept we have worked on for the past two years, and with the help of our web programmers, we are excited to be able to unveil it this week!

In past issues, the bill list is current only as of the date when the Capitol Report is written. For the two weeks until the next Report, information has not been available on bills being tracked by TFI. From now on, the link in the update will take you to the bill list on our web-based bill tracking database. So, if you click the link a week after you receive the Report, the bill list will reflect any changes that have occurred in the past week. We try to keep our own bill tracker as up-to-date as possible, but naturally, events at the Capitol sometimes delay us from being able to update status for a few days.

The bill tracker contains several functions that we are still refining. You can view individual bills along with our description in the list by pressing the "Details" link below the bill title. Additionally, you can go directly to the bill's listing on the Iowa General Assembly's website by clicking on the bill's number. If your goal is to get the full bill list and copy and paste it for your own use, you can do that by clicking the "Print All" link at the beginning of the bill list.

The TFI bill tracker list is available at:

<http://www.ialobby.com/CPCBillTracker/tabid/59/Default.aspx?cid=TFI>

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