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No Agreement on Budget Targets or Tax Bill

The House and Senate continue to work towards an agreement on budget targets and tax reform. Tax reform is the biggest piece of the puzzle, as its contents will dictate what the overall state budget will be for FY 2019. Legislators from the House and Senate appear to be moving forward but final agreement has not been found. Committee chairs are shuttling back and forth between chambers to discuss budget priorities. Once budget targets are released, formal budget bills are expected to move quickly.

Bills Continue to Move

Several bills moved their way through the House and Senate this week, with several being sent to the Governor's desk. Below is a list of a few bills of interest.

- The House and Senate spent significant time debating the “sanctuary city” ([SF 481](#)) bill this week. The bill passed both chambers and now goes to the Governor. Representative Holt, the manager of the bill in the House, said that the bill is about the rule of law. He said that the bill is not an attack on legal immigrants and has wide-spread support with the public and among law enforcement. Democrats said that there are no sanctuary cities in Iowa and the bill doesn't solve any problems. The bill requires law enforcement agencies to honor any immigration detainer request, amongst other compliance with federal agencies. Additionally, it prohibits local governments from adopting policies to encourage or discourage immigration enforcement by law enforcement or county attorneys.
- The House and Senate have passed [SF 2169](#), a bill making changes to alcohol liability laws in Iowa. The intent of the bill is to reduce the cost of dram shop premiums; the Iowa Restaurant Association has argued that Iowa's law is archaic and has significantly increased the cost of dram compared to other states.
- Governor Reynolds signed one of her legislative priorities, Future Ready Iowa ([HF 2458](#)), at the Future Ready Iowa Summit at the Iowa Events Center in Des Moines. The bill aims at increasing the number of Iowans who have training for high-demand jobs beyond high school. The bill includes a registered apprenticeship development program, a volunteer mentoring program, an employer innovation fund, and scholarships and grants. Reynolds made the bill one of her priorities for the session.
- The Governor signed [SF 2349](#), the MEWA/health insurance association plan and “Farm Bureau/Wellmark” bills into law this week. Senate File 2349 allows Farm Bureau to build a self-funded health benefit arrangement that will work for Iowans forced from the individual market. It also gives small employers the ability to band together to create affordable health care options for their employees. The bill attempts to offer more choice to individuals seeking health insurance as individuals and who do not have access to employer-sponsored coverage.

- The Governor signed [HF 2253](#), a bill dealing with lease purchase bids. The bill requires construction projects that are built by a private contractor under a lease or a lease-purchase contract with the state, local governments, community colleges or Regents to be subject to competitive bidding in the same manner that a public project is subject to competitive bidding
- The Governor signed, [HF 2349](#), a bill that requires the Racing & Gaming Commission to establish the process of voluntary exclusion from a casino. Requires the R & G Commission to give casinos access to voluntary exclusion information from a secure internet site by January 2019.

Oversight Committee to Investigate Pharmacy “Middle Man”

House Government Oversight committee chair, Rep. Bobby Kauffman, announced this week that the House Government Oversight Committee would begin investigating the practice of pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs). PBMs act as middle men between insurance companies and pharmacies. The reasons for the investigation hinge on reports of “egregious” billing practices with PBMs keeping a large chunk of the money that insurance companies are paying. One example offered by Rep. John Forbes, a Des Moines pharmacist who owns a pharmacy, was a pharmacy was being paid \$10 for a medication, but the pharmacy benefits manager was charging a public entity about \$190 for that prescription. Legislators are concerned about publically funded programs that are paying for these large scale profits by the PBMs. Rep. Kauffman indicated a meeting would be set in April, to launch the investigation.

Forums

Below are links to calendars containing information for legislative forums. As more forums are published, more links will be available.

House Democrat Legislative Forums
Senate Democrat Legislative Forums
Senate Republican Legislative Forums

In the News

1. [Iowa Business Council survey shows economic growth expected in next 6 months](#)
2. [Corbett Removed From Primary Ballot](#)
3. [Limits on Drunk Driving Lawsuits Heads to Governor’s Desk](#)
4. [Lawmakers take first steps to scale down state payments to Iowa cities](#)
5. [Traffic Camera Opponents May Get Another Shot at Ban](#)