

3/22/18, Week 11

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Budget Process Begins

This week the House and Senate struck an agreement on the deappropriations bill that had been on “hold” for several weeks. The House and Senate agreed to legislation cutting \$32 million from the current fiscal year. The budget was reduced as follows:

- Board of Regents (\$10.93 million), however, this cannot be reduced from the University of Northern Iowa, it must only be taken from University of Iowa and Iowa State;
- Community Colleges (\$500,000);
- Judicial Branch (\$1.6 million);
- Department of Human Services (\$4.32 million);
- Department of Corrections (\$3.4 million);
- Department on Education (\$784,000);
- Department of Public Health (\$625,000).

Budget targets may be released to the public next week. However these numbers will only be finalized once a tax bill has been agreed to by the House and Senate. Budget negotiations will begin in earnest once targets are assigned to each individual budget. Additionally, legislators will be anxious to conclude their work this year as their last “paid” day of session, April 7th, approaches. Note, the April 7th date for adjournment is wishful thinking.

Insurance Access Bill Move through the House

The House approved [SF 2349](#), a bill that allows for employers to form associations for the sole reason to provide health insurance to its employees, former employees, family members, etc. by directing the insurance commissioner to adopt rules that mirror the proposed Federal rules that broaden current Federal rules on these arrangements. Currently, the law requires that these associations can only be formed by common-interest entities and several other onerous provisions.

Additionally, the bill was amended to include the Farm Bureau health plan language, which carves out arrangements between Farm Bureau and Wellmark that would allow them to sell insurance that is outside of the ACA requirements, allowing them to underwrite and exclude people with pre-existing conditions. Both of these bills were introduced in an attempt to help Iowans who have been priced out of the individual market. The LSA estimates that 24,000 persons will purchase such policies, either because they do not qualify for federal subsidies or can find more favorable rates for health benefit plans. The amended bill will bounce back to the Senate, even though the Senate has already passed both bills when they were stand-alone bills.

Mental Health Priority Bill on its way to Governor

The Senate passed [HF 2456](#), the mental health reform bill unanimously. This bill builds on Iowa's community-based mental health system and decreases fragmentation of services to improve care by:

- Expanding services along the continuum of care to include evidence-based preventative services to deescalate mental health patients before crisis and to treat patients in the proper setting
- Removing the statewide sub-acute bed cap, and allowing these facilities to transition individuals to a lower level of care before they are prepared to return home
- Ensuring long-term sustainable funding for mental health services as Medicaid covered services
- Improving communication and processes between mental health professionals and law enforcement to prevent long-distance trips across the state
- Allowing mental health providers, rather than judges, to make mental health care determinations in the least restrictive environment.
- Directs DHS to adopt rules that require the inclusion of the following into regional core services: 22 Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams, 6 Access centers, and Intensive Residential Service Homes (IRSH) that provide services to up to 120 persons statewide in strategic locations throughout the state. ACT, Access Centers Intensive Residential Service Homes, and the services outlined below are only required as long as federal matching funds are still available under the Iowa Health and Wellness Plan.

Bills Continue to Move

Several bills moved their way through the House and Senate this week, with many being on their way to the Governor. Below is a list of bills that moved this week.

- The House passed [HF 2417](#), a bill that allows fairgoers the ability to use credit cards to play games at the fair. The House and Senate passed the bill unanimously, and the Governor has signed the bill into law.
- The Governor's Future Ready Iowa proposal, [HF 2458](#), is now on its way to the Governor as both the Senate and House passed the bill. The bill is a priority of the Governor and provides a mechanism to ensure Iowans are educated and/or skilled for high-demand jobs throughout the state.
- [HSB 680](#), an identical bill to [HF 2462](#), the Medicaid "oversight" bill that provides for provisions on timely payments, payment errors, standardized forms, and creates an integrated health home workgroup, was introduced this week. The bill moved through a House subcommittee and the house file was assigned a subcommittee in the Senate. The House continues to push the Senate to consider this legislation.
- The Senate passed [SF 2333](#), the "Dave and Buster's" bill, which is a bill that increases the amount of allowable prizes for games played in certain establishments. The bill now goes to the governor for her signature and is effective upon enactment.
- The telehealth coverage parity bill, [HF 2305](#), has now cleared both chambers and is on its way to the Governor for her signature. The bill requires health insurance plans to provide telehealth coverage parity, meaning they have to consistently provide similar plans the same coverage.
- The governor signed [HF 2171](#), a bill that allows banks to accept stop order payments via electronic means, rather than only written means. Both chambers passed the bill unanimously.

- Governor signed [HF 2408](#), a bill dealing with egg sales in grocery stores that participate in the WIC food program to carry conventional eggs for sale in addition to specialty eggs (cage-free and similar eggs). The bill includes exceptions for stores that do not sell specialty eggs, or which did not sell conventional eggs prior to January 2018. The House passed the bill 81-17 and the Senate passed the bill 32-17.
- [HF 2309](#), a bill that requires the Department of Human Services to consult with stakeholders and look at options for the paying nursing home expenses for a Medicaid/Medicare member who is receiving the hospice benefit to allow the Medicaid MCOs to reimburse the nursing homes directly. Both chambers have passed the bill and it now goes to the governor.
- The Senate passed [HF 2356](#), a bill that provides clarity for direct care agreements for primary care services. Physicians would be able to contract with their patients to provide for primary care services, outside of a traditional insurance contract. The patient would pay a predetermined fee for this arrangement and would have increased access to their physician. The bill now goes to the governor.
- The House passed, [SF 2347](#), a bill that deals with the importation of alcohol by increasing the limits individuals can bring into the state of Iowa. The House amended the bill to take the charge for a person violating the law to a simple misdemeanor. The bill now goes back to the Senate for consideration.

2018 Election Deadline Yields Final Roster of Candidates

The filing deadline for candidates for the June primary ended last Friday. The full list of candidates can be found [here](#). Parties can still nominate candidates by convention until August, but the vast majority of those interested in running has been decided. This is important for Federal and State offices and allows candidates to begin campaign work in earnest.

At the statehouse, Republicans hold a 59-41 advantage in the current Iowa House. As of Friday, Republicans have 47 incumbents running and 46 other candidates in 75 districts; Democrats have 37 incumbents and 76 other candidates in 95 districts. In the Senate, Republicans hold a 29-20 advantage with one seat held by an Independent. Nineteen Republicans and six Democrats are members of the 88th General Assembly and 25 seats are up for election. Of the 25 seats Republicans have seven incumbents running, and 17 other candidates in races for 19 seats. Democrats have 11 incumbents and 17 other candidates in races for 23 seats. Senator David Johnson, will run as an Independent in Senate 1; three Republicans have filed to run for the seat.

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 Senate Confirms DHS Director](#)
2. [Feenstra: We Aren't Repealing the Bottle Bill](#)
3. [House Considers Governor's Tax Reform Bill](#)
4. [Senate GOP Announces Staff Changes](#)
5. [Teresa Greenfield Fails to Get on the Primary Ballot](#)