

Legislative Update

The 2018 Iowa Legislative Session

Week of January 22, 2018

This week in the Iowa Legislature

The third week always marks when session gets into full swing, and this third week was no exception. “Fast” and “deliberate” best describe Week Three of the session. Subcommittees met at a feverish pace and committees voted on bills at a pace rarely seen this early in session. All the quick and earnest activity portrays a Legislature angling to adjourn quickly. The business-like atmosphere carried over beyond working hours, as no large-scale legislative receptions were held. Committees unceremoniously passed bills that members would like to see considered again, and bills that drew controversy and wrangling among interest groups were placed aside—at least for now.

Budget Cuts

Senate Republicans passed a bill late Thursday afternoon that would trim current year spending by \$52 million. The reductions will particularly impact the state's public universities, community colleges, justice system and human services, but K-12 education spending and the state's Medicaid program would see no reduction.

Like last year's mid-year budget cut, the Regents universities will be asked to carry a significant portion of the cutting. The University of Iowa will lose \$8.7 million, Iowa State \$6.9 million and UNI stands to lose \$3.7 million under the Senate proposal. The community college system faces a reduction of \$5.4 million, while DHS would lose nearly \$10 million for administration and services for children and families.

[SF 2117](#) passed the Senate Appropriations Committee on a party-line vote, 13-9. Democrats blamed Republicans for putting the state into budget trouble, while Republicans argued the predicament is nobody's fault but a sluggish farm economy and other factors beyond their control.

House Speaker Linda Upmeyer said House Republicans are reviewing the Senate proposal. It appears likely the House will also approve the Senate bill once that chamber votes on it, which may happen this week. Governor Reynolds proposed a smaller budget cut in her State of the State Address. She proposed cutting Medicaid by \$10 million and relying on effects of the federal tax reform bill to increase FY18 revenues by an additional \$10 million. Senate and House leadership have gone a different direction, sparing Medicaid from cuts and not counting on any influx of new money.

Senate Republicans said Thursday that they're also cutting deeper than Reynolds is recommending in order to avoid last summer's uncertainty over the fiscal year's final accounting. Under the bill, Senate Republicans claim the state should have a \$35 million surplus by the fiscal year's end.

Water Quality Passes

After more than two years of disagreement and wrangling, the Legislature passed a bill that's supposed to address water quality in Iowa. In a move that surprised many Capitol observers and high-ranking legislators, the House brought [SF 512](#) to a vote on Tuesday. The bill passed largely on party lines, with four Republicans voting "no" and four Democrats voting "yes". The bill passed 59-41.

[SF 512](#) advanced last year in the Senate alongside a similar – but quite different – bill in the House. The 2017 session ended with the two chambers disagreeing about which bill to pass, leaving the House bill ineligible for consideration and [SF 512](#) remaining on the House debate calendar. After an interim of arm-twisting and cajoling by interest groups favoring the [SF 512](#), the House relented and placed the bill up for debate.

The bill pledges about \$280 million over the next 10 years to water quality improvements. Critics charge the new initiative will do little, arguing that without accountability and measurement to determine how much water quality improves money will largely be wasted. The bill's quick passage and 50-minute floor debate is perhaps emblematic of the session. Legislative leaders and rank-and-file members appear determined to end session quickly by resolving outstanding issues fast. The tax reform debate and the budget discussions appear to be the only initiatives that will garner significant, Capitol-wide attention.

Looking Ahead

The four caucuses met a lot last week to discuss the mid-year budget cuts looming over the session. As discussed above that discussion has now formally begun with a bill to cut FY18 spending. Expect that bill to pass quickly, a K-12 education spending agreement to come next and then some combination of FY19 budget targets and tax reform proposals. At this point, it appears any difficult substantive issues—except tax reform—will not get much legislative attention.

Key Initiatives

As we informed you Thursday afternoon, a subcommittee is slated for Monday on SF 2073 (Protected Status for Dispatchers). The AS team spoke with Senator Dan Dawson Thursday, and he said he looks forward to learning how the bill could best be tailored to meet the needs of emergency dispatchers. We informed him that the bill may not reach dispatchers because of its exclusion of Chapter 97A and 411 members. A similar bill, which doesn't make that exclusion, should be introduced in the House soon by Rep. Kirsten Running-Marquardt.

On Thursday morning HSEMD Director Mark Schouten presented before the Justice Systems Appropriations Subcommittee. A PDF of the slides he presented to the legislators is attached. He emphasized the need to undertake technological consolidation of PSAPs but also said

physical consolidation of PSAP locations is a local decision. One example of technological consolidation, he said, was reducing the number of “controllers” from 113 to two.

Bills of Interest

Like sessions past, Advocacy Strategies will be tracking all bills pertaining to you. Along with this document, please find an attached excel spreadsheet with the bills you have registered for or we are waiting for a declaration. Please review this and confirm your declarations are correct. Please let us know if there are any changes that need to be made.

Housekeeping

Our ability to best represent you is based on quick and open communication. Once the legislative session progresses further, our requests for bill declarations will increase substantially. **We would ask that you let us know your organization’s position on each bill within 24 hours of our notification to you so we can respond accordingly.** Each bill we send your organization automatically generates a registration of “undecided” on that bill. This allows us to lobby on the bill or to attend a subcommittee on your behalf. But whatever your organization’s stance may be, please communicate it to us (even if the stance is “undecided”) so we can register properly and most effectively represent your interests.

Dates to Note

- February 16: First funnel deadline (6th week)
- March 16: Second funnel deadline (10th week)
- April 17th: 100th calendar day of the session; legislators’ per diem expires.

Please feel free to contact the Advocacy Strategies Team with any questions, comments, or concerns. We are pleased to be representing your interests during the 2018 legislative session and throughout the year. Contact information for your lobbying team follows. We look forward to a successful session and working with you in the days ahead.

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