

# Join Me at a Town Hall Meeting!

I am looking forward to seeing you at my town hall meetings, and the last ones are next Saturday morning as follows:

Saturday, Feb. 10th in Parkersburg at the Parkersburg Public Library from 9 to 10 a.m.

Saturday Feb. 10th in Allison at the Allison Public Library from 11 a.m. to Noon

Saturday, Feb. 10th in Denver at the Denver Community Room from 1 to 2 p.m.

## Bills Moving in Committee

The following bills moved in subcommittee or committee this past week:

**Religious Liberty Bill:** Establishes that the same legal standard used to evaluate fundamental rights cases is also used by courts to evaluate religious freedom cases when government action is set to violate a citizen's free exercise of religion. This standard is often called "strict scrutiny" and requires the government to demonstrate a compelling interest that necessitates the violation of the citizen's free exercise rights. Plus, it also requires, that if the government can demonstrate that it does have a compelling interest to violate the citizen's free exercise rights, it must do so in the least restrictive manner to the citizen. This standard is set in place for federal cases and in 34 states for state cases.

**Gender Balance on Boards:** Repeals requirement for appointments to boards and commissions to be gender-balanced. A federal judge struck down Iowa's law requiring gender balance on one of our boards. It has been difficult at times to find qualified, willing applicants and the removal of the gender restriction will allow the most qualified applicants to now be considered.

**Death Penalty:** Creates the death penalty for murder of a law enforcement officer.

**Foreign Ownership of Farm Land:** Stiffens reporting requirements, enhances enforcement action, and increases penalties to Iowa's already strict law prohibiting foreign ownership of farm land.

**Governor's Literacy Bill** - Schools must use "evidence-based" reading curriculum, including phonics, and discontinue teaching reading based on context, visual cues, or memory. Schools also must develop personalized reading plans for students not proficient in reading from 4<sup>th</sup> grade to 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Governor's AEA Bill:** I have heard a lot of input on this bill. It did pass out of the Senate subcommittee but is now in the Senate Education Committee. While I understand the governor's concerns with costs, efficiency, and oversight, and those concerns should be reflected in the final product, I also want to ensure schools know they will be able to provide all the services students are currently receiving under the present system. I believe work still needs to be done on the bill and schools and AEA's will need to have more input before this bill is ready. For a rundown on this bill please see my January 20<sup>th</sup> newsletter on my website: [www.sandysalmon.org](http://www.sandysalmon.org)

**Hands Free and Traffic Cameras:** This would prohibit the use of a cell phone while driving unless the driver is using a "hands-free" mode. This would now be a moving violation. Certain exceptions, such as for law enforcement, apply. The same bill also prohibits the use of any automated traffic enforcement system.

**Non-Medical Switching:** Prohibits insurance companies from not covering a prescription drug that was previously approved for coverage and prescribed within the last 6 months, for any covered person who is medically stable because the drug is working for them. This is to address the problem of people having to change insurance companies and then the new insurance company denying approval for a drug that is working for the patient because the company wants to put them on a cheaper drug that may not work for them.

**"Biomarker testing"** – Insurance companies are required to provide coverage for "biomarker testing", which is a special analysis done medically that helps in diagnosis, treatment, or management of a patient's disease or condition.

**Vaccination Information** – Schools are required to inform parents of exemptions allowed under state law from vaccinations required to attend school.

**Nursing Home Administrator Pilot Training Program:** Trainees must meet certain qualifications to participate. This is designed to give trainees experience as nursing homes struggle to find qualified people and always want someone with experience.

**Human Trafficking:** This bill is from the Attorney General and enhances the increase in penalties passed in last session. Certain mandatory minimums in sentencing would apply and counseling would be provided to victims of human trafficking.

**Paternity and Child Support:** Currently only the mother, the child or other interested person may file a complaint to establish paternity. The bill would allow the alleged father to also be able to file a complaint to establish paternity.

**Swatting:** Swatting is the deliberate and malicious act of reporting a false crime or a false emergency with the purpose of getting an aggressive response from law enforcement or emergency services officials. This bill raises the penalties for swatting from a misdemeanor to a felony.

**E-Verify:** Prohibits employers from knowingly employing illegals. The employer is required to check the prospective employee against the federal E-Verify program. If the E-verify system says someone is illegal, the employer has the opportunity to demonstrate through evidence that the employee is actually legal.

**UTV Access:** Allows UTV's to be operated on state park road systems just as motor vehicle is.

**Veterinarian Immunity:** Provides limited immunity for a veterinarian from liability for actions taken while assisting law enforcement with an investigation into animal abuse.

**Judicial Proceedings by Video:** Non-contested judicial proceedings shall be conducted by video, unless the court has good cause to hold them in person. Initial appearance or arraignments proceedings, upon the motion of any party, shall be conducted by video. Upon motion of any

party, a hearing in a criminal, juvenile, or postconviction relief proceeding may be conducted by video if the hearing does not prejudice a substantial right of any party. Any party may file a resistance to a motion to hold the proceeding by video.

**Harassment and Extortion Law:** Current law makes criminal harassment when someone distributes an image of another person, the victim, in a state of nudity or engaged in a sex act against their will. Technological advancements and AI have made it possible to depict the victim's likeness very accurately to make it appear like it was the victim when it really wasn't. Currently that is not criminal. This bill makes it criminal. The same thing applies to extortion where a person threatens to disseminate or distribute an image of the victim. Even if the image was not that of the victim but "doctored up" and made to look like the victim, that would be criminal under this bill.

**State Horse:** Designates the American cream draft horse as the official state horse of Iowa.

## **Tax Bills Introduced**

Two income tax bills were introduced in the Senate this past week:

1. Accelerating the current income tax cuts, lowering rates even further for both corporate incomes taxes and individual income taxes
2. Proposed constitutional amendment requiring a 2/3 majority in the legislature to increase taxes in Iowa and preserve the new flat tax

Feel free to contact me with ideas, thoughts, and concerns. My phone is 319-987-3021 or you can email me at [sandy.salmon@legis.iowa.gov](mailto:sandy.salmon@legis.iowa.gov) . I want to hear what you are thinking and will listen to your input. Together we will work to make a difference for the future of Iowa. Thank you very much for the honor of representing you!

Sincerely,

***Sandy***