

What about Pro-Life this Session?

As you may remember the legislature held a special session last summer to “re-pass” the heartbeat bill. It was signed into law and says that when an unborn baby’s fetal heartbeat is detected, that his or her life is protected. The reason is simple: when we detect a heartbeat, we know there is a life present, just as when a heartbeat is absent we know life is not there.

Planned Parenthood has sued already asking the court to put an injunction – again – on this law. It is important to remember that the Iowa Supreme Court has mostly all new justices on it and that it has never actually itself ruled on the merits of the heartbeat law. It appears it will have a chance to do just that. That decision will likely come out this summer. How the court rules will help guide us to crafting future protections for the unborn.

In the meantime, we have turned our attention to a different way to lay foundation for future protections for pre-born babies. We have a bill to require grades 7-12 in schools to be taught in sex ed. or health class human biology related to pregnancy and human development inside the womb. It will be using a high-definition, ultrasound video showing the development of the brain, heart, sex organs, and other vital organs in early fetal development and a computer-generated rendering or video, comparable to the “Meet Baby Olivia” video developed by Live Action, showing the process of fertilization and every stage of human development inside the uterus from conception to birth. This is a wonderful tool to educate youth on the reality and beauty of what is actually happening inside the womb during pregnancy. Youth will know that this is not a “clump of cells” but an actual baby is being formed, which it is hoped will engender a sense of wonder, respect, and awe at the miracle of human life.

You can watch the approximately 3-minute “Baby Olivia” video for yourself to see what students would be seeing:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-lQOooYAs8>

The video does not have to be this exact one, but one comparable to it. The “Baby Olivia” video is a medically accurate, animated glimpse of the development of a baby inside the womb. It was reviewed by OB/GYN’s and affirmed for accuracy. Gestational markers are calculated relative to conception, not to the last menstrual period (LMP), often used in the medical field, which adds about 2 weeks.

North Dakota passed a similar bill last year, and other states are also considering such a measure. This has passed the Iowa House and I am hopeful for its passage in the Iowa Senate.

Bills Passing the Senate

The following bills passed the Senate last week:

E-Verify: Prohibits employers from knowingly employing illegals. The employer is required to check the prospective employee against the federal E-Verify program. E-Verify is a federal database employers may use to verify the immigration status of a potential employee. If the E-verify system says someone is illegal, the employer has the opportunity to demonstrate through evidence that the employee is actually legal. For an employer that does not comply, on the first time a business would be required to terminate the employee and confirm to law enforcement the employee has been terminated. On the second time during the probationary period the business would lose its license.

More than 5,000 businesses in the state of Iowa already voluntarily use this program to ensure they are only hiring citizens and legal residents. E-verify is very accurate, easy to use, provides immediate results, and is free to the employer.

Illegal immigration has engulfed the southern border and has precipitated unconscionable and devastating chaos. It already is straining resources in many communities across the country and Iowa is not immune. The Biden Administration's refusal to secure the southern border and implement laws already on the books is the principal driving cause of this problem. The incentives to enter our country illegally are also a significant cause. Easy employment, taxpayer-funded benefits, lax border security, and other incentives have created a humanitarian and national security disaster. This is one policy we can implement at the state level to reduce incentives to cross the border illegally and begin to restore order and stabilize the illegal immigration crisis.

Truth-in-Labeling for Meat: A food product derived from cell-cultivated, plant-based, or insect protein cannot be labeled as beef, chicken, pork, lamb, sheep, turkey or goat.

Iowa is the number one pork, corn, and egg producer in the country, and the second top producer of soybeans. This requirement is one thing we can do to help support Iowa farmers and ensure their work is not undermined by food products made in a lab. As a relatively new product, there is a lack of research on cell-cultivated protein, which has raised questions about the safety of these products. This bill requires products made of these new types of proteins to market with integrity and make sure they cannot be confused with the quality meat farmers across the state are raising.

Land Acquisition: Restricts the DNR from acquiring land through auctions and donation from nonprofits that directly purchased the land at an auction. However, the DNR can still acquire land through willing donors and sellers, but not at an auction.

This will prevent state government from bidding on land in an auction and using tax dollars to compete against farmers to purchase land. This has been occurring in different situations across the state and we are trying to keep farmers from being disadvantaged in their ability to participate fairly in not-so-common opportunities to purchase farmland.

Unemployment Insurance: In 2021, the Iowa Legislature reformed Iowa's unemployment insurance program in an effort to get Iowans who lost their jobs back to work faster. Part of the implementation of that reform, as with many state policies, has been the adoption of rules at the agency level. This week the Senate passed a bill to put those rules into law.

Data released last fall show this reform from 2021 has been successful. The number of Iowans filing for unemployment fell almost in half, as did the time people spent on unemployment. Getting Iowans back to work faster helps address the workforce shortage and improves the lives of Iowans who lost their job.

Since fewer people are on the unemployment insurance program for a shorter amount of time, the unemployment trust fund has grown.

Unemployment taxes paid by small businesses to fill the fund can now be reduced to their lowest level possible. Lower business taxes mean Iowa employers all across the state have more money to reward the work of their employees and expand their businesses, creating more career opportunities for all.

Opioid Settlement Funds: Appropriates the funding the state of Iowa received for settlements agreed upon resulting from opioid lawsuits. The initial amount will be split between the Dept. of Health and Human Services and the Attorney General's office. Subsequent amounts will be split between state and local governments.

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 . 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