

Session End Looms Near

The following bills were passed by the Senate this past week:

Property Tax Reform: Two weeks ago I wrote about 2 property tax bills being considered in the Senate. One of the bills and some provisions of the other bill have been combined into a new bill, SF569. This new bill controls the growth of property taxes, streamlines the system, and increases transparency in property taxes and local government spending. Total property tax relief is \$100 million. It does this by:

1. Simplifying and consolidating the number of levies used by local governments
2. Limiting levies that seem open-ended for additional spending,
3. Reinstating hard levy caps
4. Providing a series of controls to protect taxpayers in which levy rates are automatically reduced when the growth in assessment values goes past a certain level: property tax relief of items 1-4 is \$45 million
5. Providing \$57 million in property tax exemptions
6. Requires local governments to contact property owners and notify them of upcoming changes to their property tax bill
7. Requires local governments to give property owners a standardized statement with consistent and clear information about the local budget

House and Senate have different property tax reform bills and a compromise will need to be negotiated.

Governor's Parental Rights Bill: This is the House and Senate agreed upon version of the governor's bill to promote parental rights and school transparency. It will now go to the governor for her signature. Here are the highlights:

- Prohibits an educational program and library materials from allowing any material with a description or depiction of a sex act as defined in Iowa law 702.17.
- Mandates that human growth and development curriculum (sex ed) in grades K-6 should be age-appropriate, research-based, and should not contain any instruction on gender identity or sexual activity.
- Requires that school districts must receive prior written consent from a parent or guardian before conducting a formal examination or

survey of a student's mental, emotional, or physical health. Parents must also be given a copy of, or link to, the survey when notice is provided.

- Parents must also give written consent to opt their child into a survey or evaluation that reveals information protected by the federal Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment, such as political and religious affiliations and sexual behavior.
- Requires school districts to publish the following on their site:
 - List of all books available to students in an online library catalog by July 1, 2025
 - Explanation of procedures and policies regarding requesting a book to be removed, a review of decisions made by the school board, and the petition process
- Requires school districts to have a policy for parents or any resident of the district to review instructional materials used in the classroom. Must include a process for parents to request their student not be provided with certain instructional materials.
- Requires districts to not knowingly give false or misleading information to a parent regarding their child's gender identity or intention to transition to a different gender. If the student requests to be addressed by a different name or pronoun due to their intent to change gender identity, it must be reported to the parent.
- Violations of this law will subject the district to a written warning for the first violation and disciplinary hearings before the Board of Educational Examiners for a possible loss of license for subsequent violations.
- The bill states that parents and guardians bear the ultimate responsibility and have the constitutionally protected right to make decisions affecting the minor, but excludes medically emergent situations.

Youth Employment Bill: Current law has some old laws on the books allowing children as young as 10 to be able to be employed in certain occupations. This bill removes these child labor permits and makes updates. It requires that no youth under 14 can be employed. However, allows youth under 14 to work in the family business or in their own business or work pursuits. Allows youth 14-15 to work longer hours. Removes limits to work hours for youth 16-17 and allows them to serve alcohol in restaurants but not in bars. Exceptions made for Iowa Workforce Development or school-based work-learning programs which have workplace safety regulations. Work activities such as livestock slaughtering,

meat packing, pipeline, boiler or engine rooms, outside window washing, explosives, strip clubs, and other such dangerous or inappropriate occupations as described in Iowa law are prohibited for youth and not allowed under this bill. This bill balances safety, educational, and developmental concerns while removing arbitrary and antiquated barriers for ambitious young Iowans wishing to work and earn money. Bill goes to the House.

Education Flexibility: This bill provides flexibility in education policy, especially for rural schools and those hard hit by labor shortages. Among its provisions, it allows online instruction given during snow days (for up to 5 days) to count toward official days of instruction. More flexibility is given for courses high school students take at community colleges to count as credit for high school coursework. Allows sequential courses to be taught at the same time (works for a low number of students enrolled in those classes). Allows instructors from a community college to teach courses in science and math for grades 9-12. Allows students to opt out of physical education class if they are involved in other physical activities or a work-based learning program. Bill goes to the House.

Constitutional Amendment: There arose a question when Governor Branstad resigned to become Ambassador to China whether Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds was the real governor or just the “acting” governor. This amendment clarifies that the Lt. Governor “acts” as governor only when there is a temporary disability of the governor. Otherwise the Lt. Governor becomes the real governor when the governor dies, resigns, or is removed from office. This amendment will now be on your ballot in 2024 to be decided by the people of Iowa.

Fresh Milk Bill: This bill provides for the on-farm, small scale production and sale of raw, unpasteurized, ungraded milk. The bill helps to meet the niche market demand while promoting strong, local connections between consumers and producers. A number of regulations apply. Bill goes to governor.

Eluding Law Enforcement: Increases penalties for fleeing and eluding a law enforcement vehicle. Bill goes to governor.

Trucker Tort Reform: This bill caps noneconomic damages in cases involving certain trucks at \$5 million. I discussed this legislation more in depth in a previous newsletter regarding medical malpractice tort reform as

this bill was very similar, and, for the same reasons I related before, I voted no. Bill goes to governor.

Nuisance Raccoon Bill: This bill states that a person does not need permission from the DNR in order to kill, trap, or ensnare a coyote, raccoon, opossum, skunk, or groundhog if the taking is for nuisance control purposes and is on agricultural property outside city limits. Bill goes to governor.

Online Car Sales: Allows licensed car dealers to advertise and sell vehicles online and deliver those cars if requested by the buyer. Allows used car dealers to use the electronic registration and titling program that new car dealers can use. Bill goes to governor.

Governor's Drug Bill: Increases penalties for numerous drug crimes including fentanyl. Allows more entities to distribute and administer opioid antagonists, such as naloxone, that are used as an emergency treatment for overdose of opioids. Bill goes to governor.

Newborn Safe Haven Act Expansion: Adoption service providers can also receive a newborn under the Newborn Safe Haven Act. Currently, hospitals and first responders can only receive a newborn under this act. Adoption service providers must then transfer the newborn to a hospital and HHS is to be notified. Bill goes to governor.

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