

The Iowa Legislature is back in session for 2007. I am beginning my second term. The big differences from two years ago is having some experience and being in the minority. Members of both parties are processing and sorting through all of the changes.

No Blood Shed

As I sat in my new seat listening to incoming Iowa leadership comments, I thought about the strife in Iraq and how we Americans transfer power (hopefully leadership) so easily without shedding any blood. In Iraq, we watch the Sunnis, the Shiites and the Kurds battle physically over so many political issues. Here in the USA, Democrats and Republicans, Conservatives and Liberals, Religious and Secular, Urban and Rural all settle our political differences peacefully at the ballot box and in the legislative chamber. What a great country! Then I remembered the American Revolution...and the Civil War. It was only with the high cost of shed blood in those wars that our own current political freedom and stability were purchased. The same, it seems is true, with respect to the civil war going on in Iraq.

Win-Win Leadership.

I received an email this week from a constituent who was commenting negatively about the win-lose mentality he hears from some legislators. As you know, we live in a world where many look at life in terms of winning or losing. After all, that is what campaigns and elections are about. However, governing is different from campaigning. Here in the Capitol, I have found it more meaningful and productive, but more difficult, to work towards win-win solutions. I took that approach when we Republicans were in the majority. I shall continue to do so as I work in the minority.

Budget Blessings – Opportunity for Mischief?

The revenue outlook is rosy due to Iowa's thriving economy. Due to the increase in revenue the legislature has the opportunity to fill up our reserve accounts (which we spent down in recent years to avoid tax increases) and to fill up the Senior Living Trust Fund (used to help senior citizens live successfully at home). We in the Iowa legislature will have to work together closely to avoid the over-spending mistakes of the recent Republican controlled Congress in Washington. It seems when one party controls the executive branch and both chambers of the legislative branch it is a recipe for mischief. House Republicans will resist the temptation to overspend and undo all of the hard work that was done the past four years to get the state's finances in order.

Education in Iowa and Job Success Indicators

A recent study from the US Department of Education tells us that a child in Iowa will achieve well above the national average on four of the six job success indicators: Family Income, Parent Education Level, Parental Employment, and Steady Employment. Congratulations parents and educators!

More Good News for Women – Iowa Judicial History

New Iowa Supreme Court Chief Justice Marsha Ternus gave the first Condition of the Iowa Judiciary speech by a woman to the Iowa Legislature. Chief Justice Ternus focused on the efforts to improve the lives of foster children and children who are in need of assistance or mental health treatment. She stressed that society as a whole benefits when foster children find safe, permanent homes with good families. When that happens, it is more likely that the children will become not only well adjusted, responsible adults—they will become good parents to future children.

One Judge – One Child.

The most significant court improvement Chief Justice Ternus mentioned involves assigning one judge to one child. As she explained, “one judge presides over every juvenile court proceeding involving a particular child. As a result, hearings are less likely to be postponed and court decisions are better informed and more consistent. Another important benefit of this practice is that the child sees at least one familiar face—the face of the judge—the entire time the child is in foster care”. Let us hope with this new leadership we can take better care of our children.

Safe Hunting

For Iowa hunters, 2006 is one for the record books. With no hunting deaths and only 14 injuries, last year goes down as the safest hunting year on record in Iowa. In the past three years there has only been one hunting fatality in Iowa. Safety officials in the Department of Natural Resources point to a couple major factors for this. Hunter safety education in Iowa has been mandatory since the 1960s, a decade in which it had become common for deaths related to hunting to number in the double digits, with a high of 20 in 1965. Another leading cause of hunting incidents occurs when one hunter loses track of the position of a fellow hunter. The relatively new (since 2003) requirement for wearing blaze orange clothing has helped improve hunter visibility, contributing to the downturn in injuries and deaths. Thank a hunter safety teacher.

Tired of Credit Card Applications?

Here is a bit of helpful information if you are. You can now call a toll free number to remove your name from being eligible to receive firm offers of credit or insurance, based on their credit report. You can choose to remove yourself from the list for five years or permanently. The number for this free service is 1-888-567-8688. This applies to prescreened offers of credit or insurance

Hot Issues Coming Up

As the session moves ahead, we will face more controversial issues like the erosion of “Right to Work” (forcing mandatory union membership), revision of recent Sex Offender regulations, the location of confined animal feedlots, and property tax reforms. Until next time, feel free to contact me, Richard Anderson, House of Representatives, Iowa State Capitol, Des Moines, IA 50319; by telephone (515) 281-7329; or by email Richard.anderson@legis.state.ia.us. Have a great day!