

Legislative Newsletter

Feb. 26, 2016



Floor Debates Pick Up Post-Funnel

The first funnel of the 2016 session was last week, and that means the past week and the upcoming week will mean plenty of committee work and floor debates. Both chambers adjourned for the week early on Thursday, and are anticipated to have stacked debate calendars for the first week of March.

Prisoner's medical expense has a hit a wall. After Senate File 3155 was killed by the Senate Judiciary Committee, another attempt at language was considered this past week. We advised our groups to oppose the language; the proposal would have codified the counties as the payor of last resort. We oppose any attempt to have local government written into the Iowa Code as payor of last resort.

Only one court case out of Woodbury County has found that in the language in the Iowa Code. The Iowa Hospital Association has been trying to write that into the Code since. It is unknown how that would affect the agreements some counties have with their local hospitals to pay for the off-site medical care for arrestees. The language was subsequently withdrawn and will not be introduced.

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The Urban County Coalition, the Iowa Supervisors Association, Iowa State Association of Counties, the Iowa Police Chiefs Association and the Iowa Sheriffs' Association along with Linn County are working to provide a standardized process to all 99 counties in how to handle medical and hospital bills going forward.

This will remain a priority to solve, and it will probably take more advance work going into the 2017 legislative session.

A reminder to forward to Jean Logan (jean@llmurphy.com) a summary of procedures the five Urban County Coalition members use for payment of medical and doctor expenses for inmates that receive medical care.

The E-911 bills are also making movement. There are two issues regarding E-911: the surcharge distribution and permissible expenditures (House File 2408 and Senate File 2241), and also the funding of the land mobile radio system (Senate File 2155). Senate File 2155, the one-time \$20 million appropriation to fund the land mobile radio fund, was passed by the Senate chamber, 30-20.

The other two bills involving E-911 relate to the surcharge distribution and expenditure. These have been referred to their respective chamber's subcommittees. While both bills propose 60 percent surcharge distribution to the local public safety answering points, there are some distinct differences between the House and Senate versions. The Senate version – SF 2241 - does not have any language about consolidation, and would distribute remaining funds to PSAP's or towards costs related to the system's interoperability. In contrast, the House version – HF 2408 – would allow for voluntary consolidation, and would keep an estimated \$3.5 million in an ending balance for emergency uses.

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This past week also involved work on mental health funding. This remains among of the most imperative priorities to be resolved this session. Lori Elam and Russell Wood visited the Capitol Thursday to walk through levy spreadsheets including all 99 counties with key lawmakers. We also spoke to representatives from Farm Bureau and intend to follow up with them this coming week. It is anticipated that 46 counties would be eligible to lower their funding levies, 13 counties may have to increase, and 40 would remain unchanged. We are still gathering data to determine what the net effect overall would be, particular if three of the urban counties – Johnson, Scott and Polk – would have to increase their levies.

The second funnel is March 11. In order for bills to remain eligible, Senate bills must be reported out of House committees and House bills out of Senate committees.

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