

Legislative Newsletter

March 18, 2016



Bills To Move Quickly Following Funnels

With both legislative funnels past, federal tax coupling bills sent to Gov. Branstad and an anticipated ending date in mid-April, both chambers have been focused on sending bills to the Governor. The Revenue Estimating Committee met March 16 and released their numbers. It is now expected the Legislature will make a deal on education funding relatively quickly, and then work through their budget bills. Generally the REC numbers confirmed its December estimate for revenue and set next year's for 4.4% -- health growth for the state.

One of the E-911 bills has moved out of the full House Appropriations Committee and is debate eligible. House File 2408 was passed unanimously. This bill relates to expenditures and distributions of the wireless surcharge. The bill also provides incentive for public safety answering points – up to \$200,000 in grants in order to implement consolidation (PSAP consolidation is still voluntarily).

There was no movement on the other E-911 bills this week, Senate File 2241 (companion to HF 2408) and Senate 2155. These are funnel-proof bills that are expected to see movement in the coming weeks.

This week also included progress on mental health funding. Lori Elam from Scott County joined the Heartland team - in addition to ISAC and the Iowa State Association of

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County Supervisors - on the Hill to meet with key senators whose districts would see a levy increase from Senate File 2236. These meetings were, on the whole, very positive. The Senate has an understanding that some counties will be hitting the fiscal wall after this session, and what needs to happen to mitigate that issue. There was no legislative movement on SF2236 this week, however, it is a funnel-proof bill because it is in the Ways & Means committee.

The key point that was conveyed to the Senate is that 73 counties of 99 have or will have the opportunity to reduce property taxes and 13 counties face property tax increases for mental health services. But the net effect of the legislation would drop property taxes \$7.4 million statewide. The team also informed the Senate that Department of Human Services Director Chuck Palmer has indicated support for the proposed change in the funding for Mental Health and will work with advocates to clarify and educate the Executive Branch.

Lori Elam was also able to explain the issue to Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds and she understood the need.

Late this week an early morning meeting with Speaker Linda Upmeyer resulted in very positive results -- it appears House Leadership, along with Senate Leadership, realize the need to pass the mental health fix this year. Information packets are being prepared for House members this week. We hope to see action in the next few weeks.

Likewise other local county officials have stepped up their efforts to educate local Farm Bureau members and ask them to contact the state organization to express their support.

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