



Funding Education Priorities

Last session the Legislature took action on 15 of 16 items in our "Plan for Prosperity," including measures to improve learning from preschool through college, make Iowa a green state, and reward hard work. As part of the education plan, we promised to improve K-12 teacher quality, expand preschool opportunities, and make college affordable for Iowa families. Under the leadership of Rep. Cindy Winkler of Davenport, chair of the House Education Appropriation Subcommittee, we took great strides to reach our education goals last year, and we are continuing in that direction this year.

The education budget for the next fiscal year includes our second year commitment to the K-12 teacher quality program, which makes good on our promise to bring Iowa teacher salaries up to 25th in the nation. We added \$70 million last year and this year's budget will add another \$75 million toward this effort. This budget also includes around \$2 million to provide staff training and technical assistance to help school districts implement statewide standards through a model core curriculum. (The policy language is included in another piece of legislation that is currently under consideration).

Last session, with an initial \$15 million appropriation, the Legislature and Governor created a statewide voluntary preschool program, with a goal of making quality preschool available to 90 percent of four-year-olds at the end of a four-year phase-in period. This year's budget builds on that effort, providing an additional \$15 million that will help an additional 5,000 kids.

Last session, we pumped an additional \$66 million into the operating budgets of the state universities, in an effort to keep tuition increases to a minimum. As a direct result, we saw the smallest tuition increase in a quarter century. We expect to maintain that same level of funding next year. Community colleges will also receive a substantial boost in funding next year, including a separate allocation for community college faculty salary increases.

The tuition grant program, helping Iowa students who attend private college, will receive \$50 million for the next fiscal year, a \$1.7 million increase above the current year's funding level. This program includes a specific \$100,000 allocation for a nurse educational loan repayment program, and a new \$50,000 allocation for a Barber and Cosmetology Arts and Sciences Tuition Grant program, providing maximum grants of \$1,200 per student.



One of my goals as Speaker of the Iowa House of Representatives is to keep community leaders and organizations informed about the issues facing the Iowa Legislature.

Legis.News is my way of giving you a brief insider's look at what is happening at the State Capitol. I hope you will find it interesting and informative.

Pat Murphy

Promoting Energy Efficiency

The House passed several measures aimed at strengthening the state's economy and improving the environment by promoting renewable energy and environmentally-responsible development. House File 2687, which passed the House April 17, provides a tax credit for redevelopment of areas in towns and cities that have previously been developed but which are currently dilapidated, underutilized or which have environmental contamination. Credits will vary from 12 percent to 30 percent of investment, with a higher credit for development that meets certain sustainable design standards.

These credits are viewed as a way to utilize the marketplace to increase development in older areas within existing communities, which can often be more expensive than just developing open farmland on the edge of town. By encouraging infill development, we can help resurrect struggling communities, cut urban sprawl, help preserve our shrinking supply of farmland, and help revitalize our cities and towns. These tax credits, which will be phased-in over several years and will be administered by the Department of Economic Development, can be used in conjunction with other development incentives.

Senate File 517, another measure that passed the House April 17, directs the state building code commissioner to develop standards for sustainable building design, also known as "green building standards," using nationally-recognized guidelines. Another bill, Senate File 2386, establishes a commission on energy efficiency standards and practices.

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