



Increased School Aid Funding

This week the Iowa House of Representatives passed legislation to allocate \$112.6 million in additional funding in the 2009-10 school year for K-12 school districts across the state. This state allocation, called "allowable growth," is set 18 months in advance so school districts can plan their budgets ahead. This will provide an additional \$222 per pupil, for a total state per-pupil spending of \$5,768 in 2009-10. This amounts to a four percent increase over the 2008-9 allocation, and is the fourth year in a row that allowable growth has been set at four percent.

Under Iowa's school finance laws, school districts receive a defined budget comprised of almost two-thirds state aid with the remainder derived from local property taxes. Overall state funding for education, including K-12, community colleges and Regents institutions, accounts for about 60 percent of the state general fund budget.

Allowable growth funding, shepherded through the House by Rep. Roger Wendt, chairman of the Education Committee, is one part of a broad package of measures to strengthen our education system from preschool through college. Last year, we enacted legislation to increase, over two years, the average K-12 public school teacher salary from 42nd in the nation to 25th. We also instituted and funded a statewide voluntary preschool program, with the goal of ensuring that 90 percent of four-year-olds have access to affordable, quality preschool education at the end of a four-year phase-in period. The allowable growth legislation passed this week includes \$33 million for preschool state aid, in addition to allowable growth. Also last year, we provided enough funding to the Regents institutions to hold tuition increases to the lowest level in over a quarter century.

We will maintain and build upon our commitment to provide a quality preschool and K-12 education for our kids and make sure higher education is affordable for middle class families. We will do this while keeping the state's fiscal house in order.

Need More Information?

If you want more information about bills, debate, and committee work in the Iowa House of Representatives, please check out our daily blog. It is a great resource for Iowans who want to keep informed during session.

www.iowahouse.org



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

Statewide Smoking Ban Proposed

The House Commerce Committee, chaired by Rep. Janet Petersen of Des Moines, approved legislation to ban smoking in public workplaces, bars, restaurants, retail shops, sports arenas, all school grounds, entertainment venues, health facilities and other enclosed public areas. The ban would also apply to hotels and motels except for designated smoking rooms, which could not exceed 22% of all rooms in a hotel or motel facility. The ban would not apply to private residences or other places not open to the public. Outdoor sports or entertainment venues would need to designate smoking areas.

Proponents note that second-hand smoke contains 60 chemicals that cause cancer, asthma and other respiratory diseases. In addition, tobacco smoke will make many other conditions worse. Proponents estimate that this ban would protect 99 percent of Iowa workers from exposure to second-hand smoke. Casinos, tobacconists, some private clubs, veterans halls, and specific nursing home rooms could be exempted from the ban. Any place not covered by the state smoking ban could be voluntarily designated as nonsmoking.

The smoking ban will be enforced by the Iowa Department of Public Health, which will provide compliance information to employers and those having ownership or control of a public place. Signs will need to be posted where smoking is banned. In addition, employers and those who control a public space will be obligated to inform violators of the smoking ban. A person performing any state or local government inspection will assess compliance. Any person, including an employee, may file a complaint with the department or bring legal action to enforce the smoking ban, including the seeking of an injunction. Civil fines will be levied against violators.

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