



UPFRONT

March 7, 2011

Title: WINNERS AND LOSERS

This last week was a busy one for me. I received lots of positive response concerning my “cupboard” column, which was a reply to the DM Registers’ “Thistle” award given to me. I know I am right and I want to thank those once again, who have spoken or written to me of their support.

The week was also spent in marathon committee meetings, going over and passing out bills deemed important enough to be considered by the full House. Of the over 600 bills introduced in the House, 218 bills survived and will be eligible for debate.

The Legislative session is organized under the “funnel” system. With the thousands of bills proposed, the Legislature needs a way to keep their focus. We operate under a “funnel” system, which is basically a series of deadlines. If bills don’t make certain hurdles in the legislative process, they fall off the Legislature’s “to do” list and are no longer discussed this session.

This last Thursday, March 4, was the first funnel date. The House now will spend the next two or three weeks debating the committee bills and deciding which ones will be sent to the Senate, and the Senate will decide which one will be sent to the House. The committee and debate process will start once again, and bills that ultimately survive will be sent to the Governor for his approval.

Remember that the bills that are being proposed generally reflect the interest of the constituents that their legislator represents. Bills are not the result of one legislator's wishes but are a product of collective thinking in response to a perceived need for change. I know that many of you have an extreme interest in the status of bills of interest, so here are the winners and losers of the first funnel week.

THE WINNERS: Several bills made the cut this week. They include bills that:

- Reform the mental health/disability services system
- Legalize internet poker
- Create a task force on the prescribing of anti-epileptic drugs
- Stop government from taking firearms during "Katrina-like" disasters
- Allow people to use guns to defend themselves anywhere, not just in their homes
- Promote the development of additional nuclear power plants in Iowa
- Allow mourning dove hunting
- Allow schools to have dress codes
- Require voters to show ID to vote
- Cap pay day loans at 35% interest
- Use vouchers for preschool (instead of the current universal free preschool)

Where there are winners, there are always losers. These bills didn't make it out of committee before the March 4 deadline:

- Require insurance coverage for autism spectrum disorders
- Establish a Deaf & Hard of Hearing Educational Bill of Rights
- Cut children's health insurance program eligibility from 300% to 133% federal poverty level
- Raise the current 55 mph speed limits to 60 mph
- Ban red light/speeding cameras
- Allow chronically ill people to use medical marijuana
- Revamp Iowa's bottle deposit laws into curbside recycling
- Require drug testing of welfare recipients

- Limit terms of state legislators
- Ban smoking in casinos
- Legalize gun “silencers”

If any of the winning bills pique your interest, please contact me by email or telephone. I look forward to hearing from you as we enter now the second stage of our session.

Visitors to the Capitol this week are Roger Gard, Cindy Jones, and Beryl Shahan, all of Mount Pleasant.

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If you have any issues or concerns, please contact me.

Be sure to include your name and address with any communication to my office.

State Rep. Dave Heaton, R-Mount Pleasant, represents the 91st House District, which includes all of Henry County and the northern half of Lee County.
