



## **UPFRONT by State Representative Dave Heaton**

April 11, 2011

**TITLE: COME TOGETHER**

We have three weeks to go in this session. There is so much to do and so far to travel. The up and down vote on the first reapportionment plan could happen this week. If it is rejected by either house, its back to the drawing board and another two weeks added to the process.

The House and Senate are miles apart on both policy and appropriation bills. Many of the policy bills include social statements of the House and will not be addressed by the Senate. The only one which could be considered is the "Late-term abortion bill" which makes abortion illegal after 20 weeks of pregnancy.

The real divide, and the most difficult to reach agreement on, are the five big fiscal issues that separate the two houses and the Governor. We must not forget the Governor in this process. He has the power to veto anything we might agree to, or can threaten to use it to force an agreement between the House and Senate. Few of us have been in the Legislature long enough to experience the influence of the Governor in this manner.

The first divisive issue that the Legislature must address is Governor Branstad's two-year budget proposal. The Governor, last week, said he would veto any appropriation bill that came to his desk that did not include a two-year budget. The House, so far, has complied with the Governor's request, over lengthy objections of the minority. The Senate is adamantly opposed and strips the second-year language from our appropriation bills and sends them back to us.

Education spending is yet to be resolved. The House wants to set allowable growth at zero percent. The Senate wants to set it at two percent. Last year, after Governor Culver's across-the-board cut, school districts raised their local property taxes or utilized their reserves to address the cut. The Legislature also, last year, utilized one-time monies from the federal government totaling \$66 million dollars with most applied to one percent allowable growth which was \$56 million dollars. The House is willing to appropriate \$286 million dollars of new money toward K-12 education. When comparing that to the Senate's \$55 million dollars, the House proposal looks very generous.

The Senate and the House disagree on the state's total budget. The Governor also has a different target. The House is approaching the budgeting process with a proposal that is coming in low, even lower than the Governor's recommendation, which is pegged at 99 percent of the State's revenue, according to the REC's forecast made in December. This is in compliance with the statutes of Iowa.

The budget debate is what leads us to the key decision the Legislature must make. What do we do with the \$329 million dollars projected to be the ending balance for the FY2011? Do we include these left over funds in the FY 2012 budget and use one-time money for ongoing expenditures, or do we return the money to the tax payer in the form of property tax relief? Spending one-time money on ongoing expenditures is what got this state in trouble in the first place. The use of cash reserves, ARRA funds from the federal government, and other state trust funds gave this state a false sense of security. I stated at the start of this session that the "day of reckoning" was to come, and a sustainable budget should be the ultimate goal of this Legislature this session. We are at that point where decisions will have to be made.

To spend the \$329 million on ongoing expenditures will take the budget to a level I don't think we will be able to sustain in the following year. I recognize that the \$329 million of carry-forward money goes into the base of FY 2012, but if you add the carry-forward to FY 2012, that means you are forcing the FY 2013 budget to need that \$329 million dollars in increased revenue to sustain the 2013 budget. That's too much to ask of an era of economic uncertainty.

Constituents, when asked their opinion of the use of the ending balance, have been split. Some have suggested property tax relief; others have suggested we use the money for one-time expenditures, improving our parks, streets, recreation, buildings.....things that would improve our state's quality of life.

Whatever the case, this Legislature has to come together on these important issues if we are going to be able to go home and all of us say that we have done our part in moving this state forward.

To accomplish this, we are going to have to find compromise between the two houses and the Governor. Compromise, to some, is a dirty word. There are those who feel that compromise is a sacrifice of one's principles. There are some instances where that could be said. One should stand on their core beliefs, but one should understand that this Legislature is made up of 150 individuals, each representing their respective constituents. We live in a democracy where collective decisions turn the wheels that make our form of government work.

Years ago, when I was a freshman legislator, a fellow representative who was retiring pulled me aside and gave me a lesson on the legislative process that has stuck with me over the years. "You only get everything you want if you control everything you want." We don't live in a world like that. He then built upon his previous statement and said something that I think captures the moment we are in and what we must recognize. "You can compromise and get part of what you want, or, you can stand your ground and try to get everything you want, resulting in getting nothing you want, and you'll get that forever. "

We must, the House, the Senate, and the Governor, come together.

My mailing address is:

Dave Heaton, State Representative, State House, Des Moines, Iowa 50319  
Phone: 515-281-7327 ~ Fax: 515-281-6958  
E-mail: [dave.heaton@legis.state.ia.us](mailto:dave.heaton@legis.state.ia.us)  
Web page: <http://www.daveheaton.net>

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.

\*\*\*