



ADVOCACY
STRATEGIES
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS & PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Legislative Update

The 2021 Iowa Legislative Session

Week of March 8th, 2021

This Week in the Iowa Legislature

With the first funnel deadline behind us, both chambers spent hours in caucus as they prepared for floor debate. Hundreds of bills were moved through both chambers this week as legislators championed their priority bills to ensure they have plenty of time to be considered in the opposite chamber before the Second Funnel Deadline, now just 3 weeks away. Some of the major policy pieces surviving the first funnel include ([SF 269](#)) which would boost next fiscal year's K-12 education funding by \$36.5 million; a bill to ban hand-held electronic devices while driving ([SF 330/HF 392](#)); legislation establishing daylight savings as the official time in Iowa ([SF 335](#)), and a bill to create a task force focused on human trafficking ([SF 521](#)). As we inch closer to the second funnel, legislation will need to continue to move quickly to survive the pending April 2 deadline.

This week two bills on policing were approved by the Senate and now go to the House chamber for consideration. The first bill [SF 479](#), Reducing Police Funding, would create requirements for the local governments to justify any cuts to law enforcement funding was passed on a 41-7 vote. The second bill [SF 534](#), Police/Rioting Proposals, introduces increased penalties for crimes and defines new crimes relating to unlawful assembly. Within the bill, drivers are given immunity against injury claims from a person who is participating in a riot and blocking traffic. The Senate File included many of the proposals from Governor Reynolds' "Back the Blue" legislation, with the exception of the ban on racial profiling. After much debate, the Senate approved the bill on a 31-17 party-line vote.

Among the bills surviving the first major hurdle, there were a handful signed into law by Governor Reynolds including a controversial election reform bill ([SF 413](#)). The legislation redefines how elections are conducted in Iowa by limiting absentee ballot drop-off locations to one ballot box, establishing penalties for election officer misconduct, and shortening early and absentee voting periods. An amendment was added to close Iowa's polls one hour earlier as well. The bill passed both chambers at an exceptional speed, making it to the Governor within eight days of its introduction. However, the legislation already faces its first legal challenge with a lawsuit filed by the League of United Latin American Citizens of Iowa to block its implementation.

Iowa's Second Congressional District Race Update

This week Congresswoman Mariannette Miller-Meeke motioned to dismiss a challenge by Rita Hart on the 2020 results in Iowa's second congressional district. The U.S. House Administration Committee voted 6-3 to postpone the decision. The initial challenge was raised by Hart, who lost the race by six votes, stating there were 22 legally-cast votes that failed to be counted. If counted, Hart would win by a 9-vote margin. However, Republicans have said the House should not hear the contest to overturn the election due to Hart's lack of exhaustive efforts to utilize all her remedies under Iowa law before turning to the U.S. House of Representatives. The committee will be considering further evidence and come to a decision in the coming months.

COVID-19 Vaccine Update

One year since the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Iowa, the state has put one million vaccines in arms (including second doses) as of Friday, which is equivalent to 14.8% of the state's currently eligible population. Iowa ranks 19th in the country for fully vaccinated adults, showing substantial progress in the vaccine roll-out.

During her news conference this week, Governor Reynolds announced essential workers, manufacturing operators, individuals 18-64 with underlying conditions, and those who are homebound due to disabilities are all eligible to get the vaccine. She also stated it is appropriate for individuals who are unable to get a shot in their home county to seek it elsewhere. Despite some reports stating Iowa has a large stockpile of vaccines, she remains adamant there is not a surplus at this time.

On the national front, President Biden is directing states to make all individuals eligible for the vaccine by May 1. The CDC continues to maintain a case and [vaccine data tracker](#) is updated daily as we progress through the vaccine roll-out. A massive bill cleared by Congress Wednesday was signed by President Biden on Thursday and will provide the latest emergency relief measure of the pandemic. Included within the federal COVID-19 relief package, known as American Rescue Plan, is a new round of \$1,400 direct checks for many Americans, as well as extended unemployment benefits for those who lost their jobs during the lockdown, childcare funding, and funding for local and state governments.

However, this federal aid bill might hinder Iowa Republicans' plans to cut taxes this session. The Senate Ways & Means committee has approved [SF 576](#) which phases out the inheritance tax over four years and strikes the triggers in the 2018 tax bill. The \$90 to \$100 million tax cut may not be allowed under the American Rescue Plan which is set to deliver \$2.7 billion in federal aid to Iowa. With many unanswered questions whether states can cut taxes after receiving federal aid, the legislature is awaiting clarity following the Revenue Estimating Conference (REC) meeting on March 19 and guidance from the U.S. Treasury Department.

Looking Ahead

Both the House and Senate plan to do more floor work this week in addition to getting their committees back to work since bills have moved through the chambers. This likely means subcommittees will increase in frequency in order to move bills with the second funnel deadline looming. Additionally, the Revenue Estimating Conference (REC) is set to meet on Friday, March 19 to offer updated budget projections that will guide legislators as they continue to craft

the state's budget for the next fiscal year. To stay up to date on scheduled committees and subcommittees and their virtual access information, follow this [link](#).

Key Initiatives this Week

On Tuesday the House debated and unanimously passed [HF 708](#), Public Safety Equipment Fund, in a 93-0 vote. The bill would establish a Public Safety Equipment Fund and establish reporting requirements for how DPS uses the funds to purchase equipment. The bill requires treasurers to ask persons renewing their vehicle registration if the person wants to contribute to the fund and allows the treasurer to keep 5% of the donations. The bill would be effective January 2022 and now goes to the Senate for consideration where the bills companion [SF 489](#) is eligible for floor debate. It is likely the House bill will be substituted for the Senate bill and sent to the Governor.

On Wednesday the AS team discussed [SF 538](#), 911 Costs, with Senator Cournoyer who confirmed the plan was still to give the stakeholders a year to resolve the issue otherwise a bill would be brought forward next year.

Bills of Interest

Like sessions past, Advocacy Strategies will be tracking all bills pertaining to you. Along with this document, each week you will find an excel spreadsheet attached with the bills you have registered for or which we are waiting for a declaration. **Please review this and confirm your declarations are correct and complete.** Please let us know if there are any changes that need to be made.

Housekeeping

Our ability to best represent you is based on quick and open communication. Once the legislative session progresses further, our requests for bill declarations will increase substantially. **We would ask that you let us know your organization's position on each bill within 24 hours of our notification to you so we can respond accordingly.**

Dates to Note

- April 2: Second funnel deadline (Friday of the 12th week)
- April 30: 110th calendar day of the session; legislators' per diem expires

Please feel free to contact the Advocacy Strategies Team with any questions, comments, or concerns. We are pleased to be representing your interests during the 2021 Legislative Session and throughout the year. Contact information for your lobbying team follows.

Threase Harms
515.975.5299 (cell)
threase@advocacyiowa.com

Kathryn Allen
309.335.3629 (cell)
admin@advocacyiowa.com

Nick Laning
515.985.9054 (cell)
Nick@advocacyiowa.com

Bob Rafferty
515.314.9462 (cell)
rafferty@raffertygroup.com

Hannah McDowell
515.450.0574 (cell)
Hannah@advocacyiowa.com

Rachel Ong
515.829.2775 (cell)
rachelong@raffertygroup.com