



# Legislative Update

## The 2021 Iowa Legislative Session

Week of March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021

### **This Week in the Iowa Legislature**

As the second funnel inches closer, floor debate and caucus time continued to take priority in order to move legislation through both chambers in time to survive the pending deadline. The week started with a handful of bills signed into law by Governor Reynolds and several more were sent to her desk for review. Amidst the legislative action this week, the Iowa Legislature grieves the loss of two public servants, correctional facility employees at Anamosa State Penitentiary, after a heinous killing Tuesday. All flags are ordered to be flown at half-staff from sunrise to sunset in the upcoming days in honor and remembrance of the two individuals who were killed in the line of duty.

Among the bills headed to the governor's desk are two controversial firearms bills. [HF 756](#), which passed by the House last week, would remove permit requirements to purchase or carry a handgun, but would still require background checks at federally licensed sellers. The Senate supported the bill in a 31-17 vote before moving on to debate [HF 621](#). This bill, which mirrors the 2005 Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act, would limit the liability of gun and ammunition manufacturers and sellers. Individuals could not sue a firearms manufacturer or dealer for the wrongful use of a firearm in a crime or for the "lawful design, manufacture, marketing or sale" of a firearm or accessory. Democrats raised concerns the legislation could hinder legitimate cases over defective merchandise or improper warnings, however the legislation still passed the Senate in a 31-17 vote.

In a contentious debate Wednesday night into the early hours of Thursday morning, the House passed a bill allowing the creation of public charter schools. If [HF 813](#) comes law, school boards would be able to establish new charter schools within their district. Furthermore, it would allow groups that are not affiliated with the school board to apply and create new charter schools that would operate separately from the public school district. A handful of amendments were approved in order to ensure transparency of budgets and governing board meetings. Some majority party members voted against the legislation with a final vote of 55-40 sending the bill to the Senate for consideration. Despite the heated arguments of Wednesday evening, a bipartisan majority unanimously approved [HF 818](#) introducing a constitutional amendment allowing individuals with felony records to vote in future elections. This amendment is a priority of Governor Reynolds and now heads to the Senate where it failed to pass in previous sessions.

## **State Budget Targets Update**

This week Senate Republicans released their Fiscal Year 2022 budget targets. With an increase of \$195 million from FY 2021, Senate Republicans set total spending for FY22 at \$7.999 billion. These targets are based on spending about 94% of the total available revenue and include the elimination of the triggers in the 2018 tax bill, phasing out of the inheritance tax, and significant property tax relief. Limited spending increases consist of boosts to K-12 education and healthcare funding, as well as a \$13 million increase for public safety. For more budget target information [click here](#).

Speaker Pat Grassley announced this week the status of any tax cuts remain uncertain due to components of the American Rescue Plan, the latest federal coronavirus relief bill. The federal legislation prohibits states that accept federal aid from using it to offset revenue losses due to tax cuts, leaving several unanswered questions for state legislatures. Speaker Grassley suggested Iowa, among other states, may have to make decisions without detailed guidance from the U.S. Treasury due to a limited timeline.

## **Iowa COVID-19 Vaccine Information**

As eligibility broadens for vaccine distribution, finding resources for appointments and general COVID-19 information has become a growing need among Iowans. Many are having success using the [Iowa Vaccine Alert Twitter](#) account to get notified when new appointment openings are offered in Iowa. In addition, the state of Iowa and the 211 call center will assist Iowans with scheduling appointments and answering general questions by dialing 211. For more information read [here](#).

Over the last week, an average of 25,700 doses of COVID-19 vaccine were administered each day in Iowa. Now, Iowa has fully vaccinated over half a million individuals, with Governor Reynold's target of April 5<sup>th</sup> for full eligibility of all adults in the state in sight. With 524,948 total vaccine series completed (both doses) and 339,825 vaccines started (one dose of a two-dose series), Iowa is still ranked in the second half of vaccine rollout nationwide. The CDC continues to maintain a case and [vaccine data tracker](#) which is updated daily.

## **Looking Ahead**

We have made it to the Second Legislative Funnel! As of Friday (4/2), all bills other than appropriations and tax policy legislation, will need to be passed out of a full committee in both chambers in order to be considered the rest of the session. This week will likely consist of limited floor debate early in the week and then be filled with committee work. Those full committee meetings will be long, with extensive closed-door discussions among members to internally debate bills and decide whether to vote them through. The committees' public business will take a long time also, as bills continue to flood their agendas as members try to push their priorities through in the final hours. Budget bills will begin moving through the process after the second funnel, as legislators prepare for adjournment. To stay up to date on scheduled committees and subcommittees and their virtual access information, follow this [link](#).

## **Key Initiatives this Week**

On Monday the AS team sent the Legislative Services Agency's (LSA) [fiscal analysis](#) of [SF 538](#), the 911 Costs legislation APCO-NENA supports. The bill is still be shelved until next year, but the analysis provides context for conversations going forward.

## **Bills of Interest**

Like sessions past, Advocacy Strategies continues to track 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.**

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