



Legislative Update

The 2021 Iowa Legislative Session

Week of February 1st, 2021

This week in the Iowa Legislature

Even with week four of the legislative session being shortened by Thursday's winter storm which sent legislators home on Wednesday night, there was still substantial subcommittee and committee action throughout the week on the limited number of bills introduced. Both chambers eagerly worked to move bills through the process as they debated mostly noncontroversial legislation with the exception of one bill, [HF 228](#), which would eliminate school districts' ability to deny open enrollment requests due to voluntary diversity plans.

On Thursday the Governor's Economic Recovery Advisory Board released its [final recommendations](#). Governor Reynolds stated these recommendations helped her shape her 2021 legislative agenda. The recommendations include efforts to expand broadband, increase access to affordable housing, childcare, modernize healthcare, boost k-12 achievement, invest in manufacturing innovation, and elevate government efficiencies.

The Governor already outlined her broadband recommendation, a \$450 million investment in rural broadband infrastructure to ensure statewide access to highspeed internet by 2025 and this week the Senate began moving her affordable housing initiatives ([SSB 1142](#)) through the process with bipartisan support.

In addition to the Governor, the House has identified childcare as a major priority having taken some action on seven different bills. They range from creating tax credits and encouraging developers to build more childcare facilities, to giving business owners tax credits to create in-house childcare. Some of the bills also address pay and provider issues including increasing the reimbursement rates for services, creating a stair-step phase out for eligibility in the Childcare Assistance Program (CCA), and providing additional state matching grants for the WAGES program.

COVID-19 Update:

The biggest surprise of the week came when the Governor announced her [new public health disaster proclamation](#) which ends Iowa's limited mask mandate and removes the previous guidelines for businesses and private gatherings while suggesting that Iowans take reasonable measures and precautions to protect themselves and others. Iowa's positivity rate average is currently just over 9% while we rank among the slowest states to rollout the vaccine with only 6.5% of Iowans who have received their first dose.

Currently, Iowa ranks 47th in COVID-19 vaccine distribution on a per capita basis. Governor Reynolds has emphasized her administration continues to push for a larger vaccine supply from the federal government. However, Iowa has only administered under 50% of the 471,000 doses distributed to the state according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#). This week all Iowans 65 years of age or older become eligible for the vaccine, but the demand will far outweigh the supply of vaccine doses.

Finally, on Monday, Governor Reynolds named Michael Boussetot the new Director of the Department of Management replacing longtime Director Dave Roederer. Subject to Senate confirmation, Boussetot will start on Monday, February 8.

Looking Ahead

In week five of the legislative session, we expect K-12 education funding (supplemental state aid) to start to work its way through the process. Both chambers read in their bills on Wednesday with plans to pass them this week to make their February deadline so schools can certify their budgets in March. Although the House and Senate are at different rates, they aren't terribly far apart. The Senate is eager to pass their 2.2% rate having already scheduled the subcommittee for Monday and possible floor debate on Tuesday afternoon. While the House is in line with the Governor's recommendation of 2.5% which will infuse another \$80 million in Iowa's schools.

It's important to keep in mind that the deadline for requests for drafting individual bills is on Friday, February 12, which is approaching quickly. Floor debate will continue to ramp up in the coming weeks as bills move through the committee process. A list of scheduled [committees and subcommittees](#) with their virtual access information can be found at the link above.

Key Initiatives this Week

On Monday the Senate State Government subcommittee of Senators Guth, Jochum, and Johnson unanimously passed [SSB 1114](#), Definition of Meeting and Public Notice Requirements. The bill amends the definition of meetings subject to the open meetings law and provides that reasonable notice be given to members of the public if they have requested notification. Senator Guth stated that he is open to discussion of the concerns brought up and the bill now awaits consideration at the full Senate State Government Committee.

On Tuesday the AS team spoke with DHS/IDPH Director Garcia regarding the vaccine distribution plan decision-making process to have a better understanding of what the advisory board is looking for as they consider requests. She said they look at several items (see below) when making a decision to change or add an entity finishing her comments with "decisions have been made and things will not be changing unless something drastic happens." She encouraged groups to send letters if the circumstances have changed.

- An organization's ability to mitigate
- Difficulty dealing with outbreaks
- Space in the office/workplace to spread-out/create distance
- Living conditions of those in the occupation
- Ability to work remotely

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

- February 12: Final day for individual bill requests
- March 5: First funnel deadline (Friday of the 8th week)
- 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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