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Legislative Update February 3, 2012

EDUCATION

Education Reform

[HSB 517 \(Undecided\)](#)

Discussions are still occurring on the education reform package. The one thing we do know about "ed reform" is that there is a lot of work to do. In the end, we believe the Governor, House Republicans, Senate Republicans and Senate Democrats will agree on 5 or 6 provisions.

The bill will be around until late in the session. It is very difficult, at this point, to determine what will end up in the final bill. United Ways of Iowa will continue to lobby for our priority: a standard comprehensive statewide measure for school readiness.

College Enrollment

[SF 2052 \(For\)](#)

The bill increases the maximum annual grant amount a student may be awarded under the minority academic grants for economic success program from \$3,500 to \$5,000; directs the state board of regents to establish college-possible programs for students in grade five and a college go center program; and directs Iowa State University to establish the science bound program, a precollegiate program that is designed to increase the number of ethnically diverse Iowa students who pursue degrees in agriculture, science, technology, engineering, or mathematics, and award successful science bound program participants full-tuition scholarships. The bill is currently in the Appropriation Committee.

INCOME

EITC Back in the Mix

[SSB 3116 \(For\)](#)

Senator Joe Bolkcom (D-Iowa City) introduced a new Earned

Legislative Website

The legislative website is a great resource. Daily schedules, live audio, "Find your Legislator" and everything you wanted to know about the General Assembly is on this site. Go to www.legis.iowa.gov.

Forums

Legislators host forums in their districts throughout the session to update their constituents on the issues and gather input from their constituents on what is important to them. See the links below for forum schedules for your elected officials.

[Senate Republican Forums](#)

[Senate Democrat Forums](#)

[House Democrat Forums](#)

[House Republican Forums](#)

(select legislator's name, then forum schedule)

Income Tax Credit (EITC) bill this week. The bill, SSB 3116, seeks to increase the credit to 13 percent. Currently, the credit is equal to 7 percent of the amount of a taxpayer's federal earned income tax credit.

The bill applies retroactively to January 1, 2012.

Bolkcom Says EITC Comes First

Senator Bolkcom, Chair of the Senate Ways & Means Committee, said no tax cut bill will pass his committee until the EITC is signed into law by Governor Branstad

Community College Training Legislation

SF 2024 (For)

UWI is also closely watching SF 2024, a bill introduced by Senate President Jack Kibbie (D-Emmetsburg). This bill establishes a skilled workforce shortage tuition grant program to be administered by the College Student Aid Commission.

UWI would like to see the bill expanded to include funding for GED attainment. This bill was amended and passed by Senate Education Committee.

HEALTH

Mental Health Restructuring Update

Once again, weekly subcommittee meetings are being held to shape the mental health restructuring effort. Legislators are attempting to put the final touches on the legislation after gathering input from interest groups.

The bill will likely be formally introduced in the next two to three weeks. Key components of the bill are:

- Elimination of Iowa's current county system in favor of a regional plan. Regions will be given discretion to implement core services.
- Regions would be comprised of at least three counties and would have populations between 200,000 and 700,000 Iowans.
- Creation of regional governing boards comprised of county supervisors and consumers.

The major sticking point will likely be funding and determining how much the restructuring will cost.

DHS Town Hall Meetings on Mental Health

DHS will be conducting a series of town hall meetings across the state to gather more public comment on the proposal.

- Dubuque - February 4, from 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. at Diamond Jo Casino in the Harbor Room; 301 Bell Street.
- Clear Lake - February 10 from 11:00 - 12:30 p.m. at the Opportunity Village; 1200 N. 9th Street W.

Everything you wanted to know about the restructuring can be found on the DHS website, [click here](#).

Food Purchasing Bill

SSB 3095 (For)

A subcommittee was held this week on SSB 3095, a bill that provides for charitable food donations to food banks and

emergency feeding organizations in Iowa. The program will be administered by the Department of Human Services.

The bill provides a mechanism for general fund appropriations to DHS in order to support several programs managed by an association representing Iowa food banks. The programs include the purchase of food, the improvement of food storage and distribution infrastructure, and instruction regarding nutrition and diet.

The bill also establishes a tax credit for owners of ag land that produce food and donate the food to food banks.

Hot Lunch Challenge Campaign

HF 2093 (For)

This bill directs the Iowa Department of Education to initiate an Iowa hot lunch challenge campaign utilizing social media and an internet site.

The campaign is to be designed to empower students, parents, schools, health professionals, community organizations, businesses, the faith community, and media by providing food and nutrition information. The information would encourage their efforts to work toward the goals of reducing childhood obesity and childhood hunger in this state by promoting healthy eating and improving access to healthy foods; making the hot lunch and other school nutrition programs in this state the best in the nation; leveraging federal resources and food assistance programs to improve access to healthy food and beverage options for children; and improving school nutrition and the educational environment by increasing consumption of healthy food and beverage items through various means. A subcommittee was appointed, with Rep. Peter Cownie (R-West Des Moines) as Chair.

NONPROFIT SUPPORT

Non-Profit Reform

HSB 559 (Undecided)

The Iowa State Bar Association Nonprofit Corporations Committee proposed amendments to the Revised Iowa Nonprofit Corporation Act. The 15-page update is based on the Model Nonprofit Corporation Act, Third Edition. A house subcommittee was held on the bill this week.

United Ways of Iowa Staff

Lisa Sieren

lsieren@unitedwaydm.org

515.246.6513