



**WattsLine** from Repr. **Ralph Watts**

**Date: Feb. 18, 2010**

*email: [ralph.watts@legis.state.ia.us](mailto:ralph.watts@legis.state.ia.us) website: [www.ralphwatts.com](http://www.ralphwatts.com)*

*(O) 281-7475 (H) Ph: 993-4850*

*Occasional updates regarding legislative issues of constituent interest.*

## **CALL OF THE HOUSE**

On 2/9/10, a Call of the House was requested by the House Republican leadership. This was to compel all of the House members to be in attendance when the House minority leadership asked the majority leadership to bring the bill out of committee for floor debate that would start the process to place the issue of same sex marriage on the ballot for a constitutional amendment vote. It failed on a mostly partisan vote of 45 ayes and 55 nays. One member of the majority party supported it. It was reported as strictly a procedural move, which is true, however, it serves as a clear indication of who supports the right of the people to vote on the marriage issue.

## **FUNNEL WEEK**

Last week was funnel week under the legislative rules. It is the cutoff date where any bill that wasn't out of committee by the end of the week was cast overboard. It's a good process that narrows the focus of the legislature each year down to a fewer number of bills to consider. Since that time, we passed out over 50 bills covering various matters, none of which puts Iowans back to work - unless you consider the five new state inspectors we added in the Puppy Mill bill. The Puppy Mill bill has been a hotly contested issue for the last couple years. The basic intent was a good one, except the bill we passed did nothing about the illegal puppy mills that exist currently. It adds five inspectors paid for by a large increase in fees on breeders that are already following the law and are inspected by the USDA. The bill, as it was originally written, included a provision to make all veterinarians mandatory reporters. That provision was removed in the final debate. Although my dog seems to be my only friend sometimes, and her love appears to be unconditional, I didn't vote for the bill. It grows government, adds fees and expenses on those in the business, and it was proffered by a much larger animal rights group that has other "ethical" issues with animal rights in mind.

## **LABOR BILLS**

There was a public hearing in the House Chamber on Wednesday the 17<sup>th</sup> that invited public comments on the proposed "fee for services" proposal which was called "Fair Share" last year. This time the unions are asking that only the Executive Branch state employees be required to pay a fee to the unions for the services they receive. The executive branch would include Regents universities and all of the departments of state government. Local schools, cities, and counties were not included. No matter how they frame it, this is an attack on the Right to Work law in Iowa. It looks like this will be debated next week.

## **GOVERNMENT REORGANIZATION**

The much publicized government reorganization bill was passed by the House. When all the smoke cleared, it appears the net result is some realignment of departments, but it falls way short of what we needed. The total savings is near \$61 million but it adds nearly 30 FTE's to the payroll. It was made more palatable when an amendment was added that kept the empowerment program that serves our youngest children out of the Department of Education. We continue to have a gaping hole in the budget that it appears the Democrats propose to partially fill by underfunding Medicaid by \$173 million and underfunding the 2% allowable growth for schools by \$170 million, which could impact property taxes depending on the decisions made by local school boards.

## **BATTLESHIP IOWA PROJECT**

If you've been to the Iowa Capitol, you've no doubt seen the scale model of the battleship Iowa on the main level. It is truly one of the most magnificent warships ever built. In an effort to preserve the original U.S.S. Iowa, a group is soliciting support to permanently dock the ship at Vallejo, CA near the Mare Island Naval Yard. It should be of great pride and interest to all Iowans. You can get more information about the project at [www.battleshipiowa.org](http://www.battleshipiowa.org).

**Next Forum:** Saturday Feb. 20, Raccoon Valley Bank Community Room; Adel, 9:30a