



WattsLine from Repr. **Ralph Watts**

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Occasional updates regarding legislative issues of constituent interest.

FUNNEL WEEK

This week marks the close of the 2nd funnel that is designed to cull the number of bills available for debate in the few remaining weeks of this year's session. Any bill that hasn't been passed out of committee in both chambers is automatically thrown overboard and is ineligible for further consideration --- unless the leadership decides they want to resurrect it. So, it appears the job-killing labor bills are dead unless the leadership decides to play games with them somewhere in the last bills out of the session. The prevailing wage, choice of doctor, and the Fair Share (Right to Work) efforts by the unions have hung over this session like a wet blanket and would close the door for many businesses to consider expanding or opening a factory in Iowa. Let's hope the leadership doesn't get cute and decide to piggy back them onto a mess of bills in the last days of the session, similar to what happened last year.

As a result of the funnel we can now see what is really important for Iowans as viewed through the worldview of our current legislative leadership. Painfully absent from the list are any initiatives whatsoever designed to encourage private sector businesses to add employees to stimulate our economy. So far, the only initiative designed to add jobs is the five inspectors that will be hired for inspection of puppy mills. Instead there are many issues that poke the state finger in the eyes of employers. For some reason the majority members of the legislature have decided that it's important to require all employers to provide a separate room to accommodate breast feeding mothers to pump milk. Another measure would make it unlawful to feed wildlife on public or private land, unless of course you're a farmer that has no choice but to give up a chunk of your hay crop to feed the deer. Since we don't trust local school authorities to do the right thing we now have a bill that requires all school districts and state agencies to use green cleaning products.

SMART PLANNING

For several years the activist environmental community has been pushing for using "SMART" planning in a wide variety of their favorite issues, such as land use planning, energy development, city and county planning and a host of others. Unless used with a heavy dose of common sense, "SMART" planning can be anything but smart. It is merely another angle for radical environmentalists to influence public policy. As a general rule, it results in the compromising of land rights by imposition of regulations on the landowners as well as cities and counties.

Now that the intensity of the 2008 flood is over, the Rebuild Iowa Office (RIO) office is turning its attention to statewide planning and they have developed a bill creating a permanent 31 member comprehensive planning task force. The bill also codifies "SMART" comprehensive planning principles for state, regional, county and city planning. The bill creates a 31 member permanent unpaid task force in order to keep the momentum in place to push the agenda. This is a totally unnecessary initiative since most of the cities and counties are considering their own versions of what seems to fit in their jurisdictions themselves. In this case it would be preferable if the state kept out of comprehensive planning for everyone.

NEXT FORUM: Waukee City Hall; March 20 at 9:30a.