



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

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Occasional updates regarding legislative issues of constituent interest.

## **Opening of Session**

The Iowa Legislature opened last week with the traditional Condition of the State address by Governor Culver. The House chambers were filled with frequent applause as Governor Culver spoke of the many bills passed in last year's legislative session. It did feel like a very festive occasion as the balconies were filled with spectators, the Chamber floor was filled with extra chairs and the television cameras were in every possible location.

## **Iowa State Finances**

The Governor has submitted a proposed 2009 budget to the legislature and it has generated some anxiety among all of the legislature. The budget passed last year by the Democratic majority and the one proposed by the Governor for fiscal year 2009 provide the largest increase (20%) in spending that has ever been seen. Simply stated, these promises are way more than projections of state income, and those projections were made before the recent problems on Wall Street. In order to provide funds for this shortage, the Governor's proposed budget had to create income sources (tax) and he found 9 ways to come up with more taxpayer money.

Example:

- The proposed bottle bill will put 2 cents into the state coffers for every plastic bottle you buy.
- Out of state corporations who do business in Iowa could see higher taxes and that, coupled with the high real estate taxes that they pay, could potentially cause them to look at their bottom line, move elsewhere and take the jobs with them.
- Another proposal is that a larger portion of gambling money be shifted into the general fund, meaning that it would not be available for infrastructure as it is currently used.

This session will be a struggle to keep the lid on spending.

## **Voter Survey**

Many of you took the time to complete the voter survey which I included with my first newsletter. We have had a great response so far. We are working to summarize the responses and it should be posted on my website at [www.ralphwatts.com](http://www.ralphwatts.com) sometime within the next week.

## **Forums: Repr. Watts and Senator Behn**

January 26	Adel - ISU Extension Office – Fairgrounds	10a
February 9	Waukee City Hall	9a
February 23	Raccoon Valley Bank – Dallas Center	9a
March 1	Adel - ISU Extension Office – Fairgrounds	10a
March 15	Woodward Senior Center	10a
March 22	Waukee City Hall	9a
April 5	Adel - ISU Extension Office – Fairgrounds	10a
April 19	Waukee City Hall	9a