



**WattsLine** from Repr. Ralph Watts

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**Occasional updates regarding legislative issues of constituent interest.**

## **Bills of Interest**

Consideration of some form of the meth bill is in subcommittee in the House. The Senate passed their version on Thursday. Whatever the outcome of the bill, there are a couple of things that struck me as we are trying to deal with it. The first is; whatever we do, it will only attempt to deal with less than 20% of the meth problem in Iowa. 80% of the meth is imported from other states and from out of the country. The second is; during our discussions, a drug store brought in package and bottle samples of the products that contain pseudoephedrine. In total there were about 75 packages of products that are very familiar to all of us and are used by our families, young and old. When used responsibly, they are very beneficial to all of us when we get occasional colds, sinus problems, etc. and they are available at the grocery stores and other convenient places in the community. After we get through with it here at the legislature, they will likely be found in useful quantities only in the drug stores, and then only after you show an ID to purchase them, and you sign a log recording the purchase. This is just another example of how the stupid guys win, again. Responsible people will be inconvenienced and lose a little more freedom because of the irresponsible behavior of a few.

This week the House passed HF277 which allowed for the deregulation of the three remaining rate regulated telephone companies in Iowa. This is reflective of the huge changes in the telecommunications market that has occurred in the last few years. Now, cell phones outnumber wire lines and are preferred over wire line by an increasing number of people. The use of the Internet by companies for a vast majority of their phone service will have a huge impact on future telephone business. This service, called Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) may continue to revolutionize long distance costs for all of us. There is little question that many alternatives are available to the consumer and continued regulation made little sense. It passed the House 94-6 and is being taken up by the Senate. I was assigned the bill to manage and be the floor leader. After several years of trying, we were able to get wide agreement on a bill from the regulators, telephone companies, large and small, and others in the telephone industry.

Budget subcommittees are meeting regularly and will start dealing with the difficult budget situation that lurks over all we are attempting to get done this year. No doubt this will get a lot of attention in the next few weeks.

## **ETC.**

The remaining public forums are: **Feb. 19 @ 9a** in Dallas Center at Raccoon Valley Bank, **Mar. 12 @ 9a** at Waukee City Hall, and **Mar. 19 @ 9a** in Adel at the Raccoon Valley Bank Community Room.