



**WattsLine** from Repr. Ralph Watts

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Occasional updates regarding legislative issues of constituent interest.

### **Honoring Vietnam Vets**

On Monday we had the pleasure of welcoming Vietnam Vets to the House for a special resolution honoring those that served. Long overdue, it was a moving experience for me because those that served are my generation. During Vietnam we had the draft by lottery number and mine happened to be in the mid 300's, 365 being the highest, so I wasn't called to serve. I have always had the highest respect for those that did, and I add my thanks.

### **Press coverage inaccurate**

Local television and radio, on Thursday, suggested the House was going to consider a bill to increase residential property taxes and lower business property taxes. The report was inaccurate. One of the issues the House considered was a bill that would tie future growth in commercial and industrial property taxes together with ag and residential and allow them to grow a maximum of 4% annually and the growth of each category, i.e. ag, residential, commercial, and industrial, would be limited to the lowest growth category. For example, if ag grew at 2%, all categories would be limited to no more than 2%. The bill passed the House and will be considered by the Senate.

### **Property Taxes**

The efforts to restrain the growth of property taxes by the Legislature is always a tough one. There is a basic problem with the legislature considering property tax issues, because property taxes are largely a local issue. When you review your local property tax bill, you'll find the largest components of the tax are schools, cities, and counties, in that order. A discussion about local property taxes needs to start with those in charge locally. I would be the first to admit that, as a whole, the state doesn't do extremely well with the budgets we deal with, and us trying to do something with spending on the local level is a little misdirected. We establish broad property tax policy, but we don't control local government spending.

### **Medicaid**

We finished debate on a new Medicaid proposal this week that, if it proves successful, will provide some access to health care for additional Iowans while using the existing health dollars spent by the state. The plan is to get additional federal funds, based on the current state support at Broadlawns, Univ. of Iowa and Mental Health institutions in the state. It is the first of its kind in the country and was put together by several legislative leaders, the Governors office, and in agreement with the Health and Human Service Secretary, Leavitt. In any case, it should help us get through our current Medicaid issues without additional taxes. That would be a good thing.

### **Approaching end of session**

During the next week we will have some heavy issues to complete as we come to the end of the session. Tobacco Taxes, Values Fund, Early Childhood Education, and State spending in general remain to be resolved. I expect to see a lot of weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth trying to spend more of your money. Stay tuned.

### **Feel free to contact me**

During these next few days I would welcome your input on the issues. Email at the capitol is usually the most efficient way. You can reach me at [ralph.watts@legis.state.ia.us](mailto:ralph.watts@legis.state.ia.us).