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Contact: Don McDowell (515.281.6043)

# **Senate Republican Leader Jerry Behn Delivers Opening Day Remarks**

**DES MOINES** - Senate Republican Leader Jerry Behn (R-Boone) today delivered his opening day speech of the second session of the 84<sup>th</sup> Iowa General Assembly on the floor of the Iowa Senate. His remarks, as prepared for delivery, are as follows:

Thank you Mr. President.

Colleagues, friends, family and all Iowans:

Winston Churchill once famously said, "Courage is the first of human qualities because it is the quality that guarantees all the others."

As we meet again today to commence the people's business, we must summon the courage to put aside our differences to work in a spirit of true bi-partisanship.

Without courage we cannot face the enormous challenges that exist and bring about the measurable results that Iowans expect and deserve.

The challenges that face our beloved state require bold thinking, fresh ideas and an ability to listen carefully.

We must listen not only to what our colleagues have to say - but most especially to those 60,000 bosses that are back home in each of our districts, counting on us always do what is right for their families, neighborhoods, communities and schools.

Before we take any action here under the golden dome, they want us to ask, "How will this provide fewer hassles, more choices, more money, more time and fewer worries for our constituents back home?"

As we start this new session, we still have over 100,000 Iowans out of work. We still have some of the highest property taxes in the nation. We have an education system that is still revered but is quickly losing its global competitiveness. We have a government that can and should always become more efficient and more effective.

In the last year, we made some good first steps but it is just that –first steps.

After years of overspending, we tightened the belt and started to get our budget back under control. We began a serious discussion about the burdensome government rules and regulations that are hampering job growth and we put in place the Iowa Partnership for Economic Progress, which will be another tool that can be used to bring more economic development to our neighborhoods and communities.

However, we are just getting started.

The best is yet to come.

As Senate Republicans, we intend to have a laser-like focus on job creation and career development this session and we hope our colleagues across the aisle will join with us to allow a rigorous debate on these issues.

Now is not the time to obstruct debate or say “No” to good ideas, just because they came from the other side of the aisle.

Now is the time to focus on several big areas of concentration: a balanced budget that spends less than we take in without raising taxes, broad based property tax relief and government rule and regulation reform.

First and foremost, we must continue our work to have a balanced budget again, one that does not spend more than we take in and does not raise taxes. Just as hardworking Iowa taxpayers tighten their belts, so too should government. We must continue to wean ourselves off the practice of using one-time dollars for ongoing expenses and continue to provide transparency and accountability.

The days of overspending and the resultant devastating across the board cuts are over. We must fund the core services of government, invest in the priorities Iowans care about and eliminate waste. Our budgeting decisions should not just be about this year – we must think about the next decade and the next generation.

The reason I ran for the Senate is because of my four children and is now my four grandchildren. I want them to be able to grow up in Iowa - in safe communities with good schools and as they get older - be able to find a good job and build a rewarding career right here if they so choose.

That is why we must give our job creators and entrepreneurs the tools necessary to succeed and make our state the most attractive and competitive not just in this country – but in the entire world.

Accomplishing that begins with broad based property tax relief. We cannot afford to have property tax rates that rival that of downtown New York City. A property tax system that simply shifts around the tax burden, picks winners and losers, relies on state revenue triggers and onerous handwritten applications will not work and is not acceptable.

Instead, Senate Republicans look forward to working closely with Governor Branstad, our colleagues in the House of Representatives and those Senate Democrats willing to be guided by something other than the party line in order to provide genuine and authentic property tax relief to hardworking Iowa taxpayers.

Along with property tax reform and responsible budgeting comes removing some of the barriers to growth by getting a handle on our increasingly burdensome government rules and regulations. Last session, Senate Republicans spearheaded an effort to go across the state to hear directly from Iowans about how government red tape is holding back their success.

We have put together a number of serious reforms that would make Iowa more competitive and give hardworking Iowans a greater seat at the table. We look forward to presenting these bold reforms and having a real and substantive debate on their merits.

However, this Senate will certainly be asked work on other important endeavors as well.

We must have the courage to tackle challenges that exist in education, health care, clean energy, agriculture and with our natural resources. We must do better in providing oversight, protecting life, promoting freedom, liberty and opportunity. We should give Iowans a vote on the basic definition of marriage and we must never stop trying to make our government more open and transparent.

We must also challenge ourselves to guarantee ample public safety and ensure that we have roads, bridges and infrastructure that are safe, reliable and capable of supporting the Iowa economy of the future.

Yet with all the challenges we face, I love this state. We are a state that has unquantifiable potential and so many wonderful assets.

All of us should be proud of what we have to offer.

We have Interstate highways that run coast to coast and border to border, barge traffic with locks and dams and a double track railroad across our state.

We have the finest natural resources, the most productive soils and ample water supplies.

We have great manufacturing, agriculture, agribusiness, insurance and banking sectors.

We have incredible institutions of higher learning – the University of Iowa produces some of the world’s best doctors and lawyers. Iowa State University provides some of the finest engineers and scientists and the University of Northern Iowa some of the best teachers and business leaders. We have great community colleges and private colleges that provide so much value, training and workforce development.

Yet, without question, the people of Iowa are truly this state’s greatest asset – their independence, self-reliance, honesty, resilience, work ethic, volunteerism and concern and care for others should serve as an inspiration to us every day we are here on their behalf.

We have incredible, hardworking people in all 947 communities doing extraordinary things to renew the promise that exists in all 99 counties.

These Iowans just want to make a good living and raise their families and they deserve a government that respects, appreciates and encourages them.

I can say with confidence that this Senate Republican caucus is very representative of the people of this state and we are ready and eager to work hard to make Iowa an even greater place to build a rewarding career and raise a healthy family.

I may be new to this position but I am not new to the Senate.

However, I can say with the utmost assurance that in my 15 years here, this is the most talented caucus I have ever been a part of and we have had some great ones.

It is an honor and privilege to represent my central Iowa constituents and to be a part of such an entrepreneurial caucus of individuals – many of whom are current or former employers with the expertise, knowledge and experience needed make Iowa the envy of the world.

Mr. President, as I close this morning, I want to welcome and congratulate our newest colleague, Senator Liz Mathis. I wish to welcome all the clerks, pages, door keepers and all the other staff who work so hard every day to keep us on track.

I hope that as we work in these weeks and months ahead, all 50 of us will have the courage each day to do what is right for those we were elected to serve.

Thank you very much, may God bless our great state and may God bless America.