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The Senate

State of Iowa
Eighty-fifth General Assembly
STATEHOUSE
Des Moines, IA 50319

COMMITTEES

Agriculture
Appropriations
Local Government

Administration and Regulation
Appropriations Subcommittee,
Ranking Member

The View from Here by Senator Dennis Guth District 4

House File 359

Of particular interest to the residents of Senate District 4 is HF 359. This bill would once more give Iowans the ability to locally regulate establishments such as the juice bar that now operates in Corwith. In 2012, the Iowa Supreme Court ruled that live performances that include nude dancing should be construed as “material” that is regulated by the state. HF 359 was on the list for debate this week, but heated debate on other bills occupied our time.

More Disparities than Common Ground in Education Reform

Republicans and Democrats have struggled since 2011 to reform Iowa’s education system. In that time, Governor Branstad has proposed legislation raising teacher pay and establishing a mentoring system for teachers, and Senate Democrats and House Republicans have each introduced their own versions of education reform. Each reform plan works to enable Iowa teachers to prepare students for the competitive job market and global marketplace.

Here are some key provisions in the proposed bills:

Online Learning: Both the House Republicans and Governor Branstad agree that the Department of Education should set the fee schedule for public and nonpublic schools to participate in the Department’s Iowa Online Learning initiative. They both appropriate \$1.5 million for FY 2014 to help expand the program. In contrast, Senate Democrats establish the fees and set limits on the cost of administering the program rather than let experts from the Department set parameters.

Teacher Training and Development: All plans emphasize the need for more thorough reviews and teacher mentoring programs.

Teacher Pay: Senate Democrats and Governor Branstad would like to raise starting teacher pay from \$28,000 to \$35,000. House Republicans would like to raise annual starting salary to \$32,000.

The three plans have several similarities, but one difference looms large - the allowable growth rate. The House Republicans’ target over two years is a 2% increase while the Senate Democrats increase the rate to 4% over the next two fiscal years.

Education reform is critical to ensure that Iowa students do not graduate high school ill-prepared for college and the workplace. We need to provide incentives for Iowa's best and brightest to become teachers, give them the support they need to be good teachers, and compensate them well for the important task they undertake daily – preparing our students to compete in a global economy.

REC Meeting Key Component of Budget Process

The Revenue Estimating Conference should show an increase of around \$500 million in tax revenues for last year. This is good news for Iowans. However, the Democrats budget will still be over \$200 million above what the state takes in. We must work to meet the needs of Iowans while adhering to the sound budgeting principles of spending within one's means so future generations are not burdened with our short-sightedness.

Day of Dialogue

On Wednesday, I spoke on the Senate floor in support of the Day of Dialogue, a day when Focus on the Family encourages students to have honest dialogue about life and relationships. I said I would want youth to have all the facts about having a relationship outside the boundaries of monogamous heterosexual marriage. I would not want to exclude the fact that there are numerous health problems associated with the homosexual lifestyle. I summed up my comments with a quote from G. K. Chesterton, "The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult, and left untried."

I invite you to come to the Capitol next Tuesday for the Family Leader's annual Rally for Life, Marriage, and Family to be held at 11:30AM in the first floor rotunda.

Thank you for allowing me to represent the people of Senate District 4. I may be reached at dennis.guth@legis.iowa.gov.