

Your Capitol Voice

Representative Bobby Kaufmann

The theme of this week's column is highlighting the bipartisan work we are doing in Des Moines. Iowa is not Washington D.C. We are required to pass a balanced budget and that requires working together. We understand that after an election, Iowans expect us to come together and govern. Often times citizens are led to believe that legislators always disagree but the vast majority of the time in the Capitol, Republicans and Democrats work together.

Through the first funnel deadline, 91% of the bills passed out of House committees with bipartisan support (217 out of 238 bills). I serve on two of the busiest policy committees: Judiciary committee and Chair the State Government committee. Through the first funnel these two committees have passed 74 bills. Of those 74 bills passed, 65 received bipartisan support. I am personally floor managing 7 of those 74 bills and each one has passed committee with unanimous support. I think that is worth repeating. Every single bill I have managed in Judiciary and State Government has received the support of every Republican and Democrat on the committee. That is much more of an indicator of how we work in Des Moines than the news stories where we disagree or the never ending attempts to cast everything in a campaign-type attack.

I want to highlight three bills that have received strong bipartisan support. Many of you have contacted me on these three important bills.

SAVE Extension – I have previously written about the important of passing the extension of our school infrastructure bill. Last week I was pleased to see this legislation pass the Iowa House with 97 out of 100 votes. Getting this done this session is one of my top priorities. This bill now heads to the Senate where I will be pushing for it to get a quick vote.

Election Integrity – Many of you may recall the controversy over counting absentee ballots in northern Iowa. Most auditors would tell you there was a flaw in how to count absentee ballots that arrive late. My State Government Committee took up the task of ensuring we have a system to count every ballot that is legally cast. I am happy to report that the bill we passed in State Government passed the Iowa House unanimously last week. It implements the statewide use of postal barcodes to determine the date than an absentee ballot was placed into the federal postal service. This new uniform system will help to ensure every vote is counted.

Children's Mental Health – The Health and Human Services Committee passed the Governor's Children's Mental Health bill with strong bipartisan support. The bill codifies a Children's System State Board to act as a central entity advising on the administration of the children's mental health system within DHS. Regional governance will be established within existing regions. Each region must hire a children's services coordinator who will serve as the subject matter expert and focus solely on the development of children's mental health services. The bill establishes eligibility criteria and core services that will be provided to eligible children including crisis services, inpatient treatment, and outpatient therapy. This bill is a part of the Governor's budget to expand the statewide crisis hotline to children's mental health services, provide additional funding for developing mental health professionals in rural areas, and eliminating the waiting list for Children's Mental Health Home and Community-Based Service Waiver.

Listening Post Schedule (March 23):

8 AM-Iowa City Chamber

9:30 AM-North Liberty City Hall

Capitol visitors: Todd Thein, West Branch; Amy Zybarth, Muscatine County Treasurer; Tim Malott, Cedar County EMA Director; Dawn and Julia Smith, Durant.

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