

Hello everyone,
Here is this week's column.
Please note that my two listening posts are tomorrow:
9am – Tipton
1pm – West Branch

Let me know your thoughts!
Bobby

Your Capitol Voice **Representative Bobby Kaufmann**

There are two more full weeks of Committee work before the first “funnel” deadline. This deadline is designed to winnow the thousands of bills to a few that have a chance to pass the House. Over the next two weeks, we will start to see policy come out of those committees and I will write about the various proposals. Health care and education take up over 80% of our state budget so every day I advocate, visit, or talk to a constituents in Cedar, Muscatine, or Johnson County about these topics. Budgets are being proposed and shared. Many of these numbers are not realistic and will never pass the legislative process. Some of the cuts proposed by the Senate, for example, I will NOT support and they will NOT be passed by the House. Tax bills that are considered by the Ways and Means tax committee will be considered later since the funnel deadline does not apply to this important committee. I sit on Ways and Means.

This week I will write about a bill I managed and led to passage in subcommittee. It is important to a lot of people back home. I also want to summarize the first stage of our Oversight investigation into the state ICN board.

EMS – For years it has been a struggle to establish a steady funding source for our EMS officials. The bill I managed this week does not solve the problem, but it certainly goes a long way toward making it better. The EMS world suffers many challenges – volunteer recruitment, funding, training requirements, billing, and Medicaid reimbursement. The bill I ran out of a subcommittee this week goes a long way toward making our ambulance services solvent when it comes to fair compensation for Medicaid transports.

Currently when our ambulances transport with a Medicaid patient, they receive far less than the cost of the transport from the state government. This creates an incredible burden on their finances when a call costs them \$600 and they only get a fraction of that back. I ran the GEMT bill this week. GEMT is a federally-funded Medicaid appropriation. A few states have asked CMS to allow them access to these funds in order to bridge the gap between state funding for a Medicaid patient reimbursement and the actual costs. Bottom-line – if we are successful, ambulance services will no longer have to “eat” the costs of these transports. The State EMS association has called this one of the biggest EMS bills in years. I will be pushing hard to get this done.

ICN Scandal – This week we had our first ICN investigation meeting and it produced some incredibly disturbing results. The former Director (who is now fired) pulled off one the biggest scams, when it comes to the use of taxpayer dollars, in more than a decade. He was able to consolidate purchasing power to pull off his scheme. The acts he accomplished include: improperly billing the state for his commute, giving his friend a job she was not qualified for and subsequently giving her a \$19,000 raise,

taking trips to Belize on the taxpayer dime, and having unofficial agreements with vendors who were friends to circumvent competitive bidding laws.

Possibly the most egregious thing he did was use ICN tax dollars to purchase two semi-trailers full of technology and have it delivered to his house. He then brazenly started to sell the equipment on eBay. It was this latest and most arrogant move that caused a whistleblower to contact the State Auditor. She immediately began an investigation and uncovered most of the wrongdoing I have described. This is just step one. I will not stop until justice has been served. Our next move will be to bring in members of the ICN world to talk about how he was able to get away with all of this for so long. One point of good news is that most of the equipment he attempted to sell has been recovered.

Capitol visitors: Dave Timmerman, Bennett; Derek Sawvell, Wilton; Bob Welsh, Pete Snyder, Iowa City; Larry Kudej, North Liberty; Diana Tank, Alan Ostergen, Muscatine; Kevin Hatfield, West Branch; Tipton FFA students; West Branch FFA students; Shannon Walshire and Tammy Nehring, North Cedar School Board; Jodi Yeggy, West Branch School Board; Rhonda Price, Julie Brinegar, Solon.

Listening Post schedule, February 10:
9 AM-Tipton Farm Bureau Office
1 PM-West Branch Fire Dept. Meeting Room

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