



# Legislative Update

## The 2021 Iowa Legislative Session

Week of March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021

### **This Week in the Iowa Legislature**

Funnel week is over! This past week was a big one, with the first funnel deadline for bills on Friday, March 5<sup>th</sup> coming to a close. Numerous bills were rapidly pushed through the committee process, as lawmakers wanted their bills to survive past the funnel deadline. Prioritized bills ranged from broadband expansion to school curriculum restrictions and election changes.

Governor Reynolds joined 22 other state governors in opposing the new standard used to make federal covid relief fund allocations to states. Reynolds stated the new standard is inequitable by prioritizing states by those unemployed rather than total state population, which she believes will negatively impact the amount of federal aid Iowa will receive.

The Iowa House amended and unanimously passed a pandemic tax relief bill worth \$128 million this week. The bill would provide pandemic-related tax exemptions for PPP (Paycheck Protection Program) loans, certain COVID-19 grants, and unemployment insurance payments received during the pandemic. Lawmakers said taxing pandemic relief funds is wrong, as many Iowans have been adversely impacted with employment struggles since the onset of COVID-19. The bill now goes back to the Senate for final approval before heading to the Governor.

In a last minute move by House Republicans, the Public Safety Committee introduced and passed a priority bill, the “constitutional carry” bill aimed at easing gun restrictions. This would decrease the number of background checks and permit requirements, making it possible for many Iowans to carry concealed weapons without a permit. Currently, Iowans must have a permit to purchase firearms and an additional permit to carry concealed firearms.

### **COVID-19 Vaccine Update**

Iowa has seen a slight improvement in its COVID-19 vaccine distribution efforts over the last couple of weeks, ranking 13<sup>th</sup> overall in having at least one dose of the vaccine administered to those currently eligible. However, Iowa does rank 49<sup>th</sup> overall for distribution of second vaccine doses. Governor Reynolds believes the low ranking in Iowa’s distribution of second doses is due to vaccine reporting errors and stated she is working to find a solution. COVID-19 cases have also decreased in the last few weeks. The CDC maintains a case and [vaccine data tracker](#) that is updated daily. Also, IDPH announced effective this week Iowans 64 and younger with specified underlying conditions are now eligible for vaccination.

Finally, a vaccine belief and exemptions bill passed the full Senate Human Resources Committee on a 7-6 vote on Tuesday. The bill protects employees from employers acting against them if they refuse to be vaccinated. The bill also prevents the state from including vaccination information on IDs and expands the current vaccination exemption requirement for school-aged children.

## Looking Ahead

With the first legislative funnel behind us, a new phase of the session begins. The coming week will be largely made up of debate as the public policy focus shifts from committee work to the chambers' respective floors. Both the House and Senate have scheduled meetings for the Ways & Means and Appropriations Committees, but the majority of the policy committees will not meet. Subcommittee work will continue especially in the Senate due to the volume of bills the House has sent over for consideration, however, that work will be limited this week as well. Each chamber has hundreds of bills they could consider, many of which require passage from a committee in the opposite chamber to make the second funnel—which falls on April 2. To stay up to date on scheduled committees and subcommittees and their virtual access information, follow this [link](#).

## Key Initiatives this Week

On Tuesday the House Public Safety Committee passed [HSB 5](#), Excessive Speed Deaths, in a 13-7 vote. The bill would make it a Class C felony when someone causes a death due to speeding more than 25 mph over various posted speed limits. An amendment was discussed to increase the standard to 35 mph over the speed limit. The Iowa State Sheriffs and Deputies Association has indicated more amendments are likely coming on this bill. The bill is now eligible for House floor debate.

On Tuesday IBC's e-bike legislation, [HF 493](#), was assigned to a Senate Transportation subcommittee of Senators Koelker, Dickey, and Giddens. Since HF 493 has already passed the House, this will be the only e-bike bill moving forward. The AS team continues to work with the subcommittee on the amendment language to address concerns and move this bill forward.

## Bills of Interest

Like sessions past, Advocacy Strategies will be tracking all bills pertaining to you. Along with this document, each week you will find an excel spreadsheet attached with the bills you have registered for or which we are waiting for a declaration. **Please note it has been updated and does reflect all bills making the first funnel deadline. Please review this and confirm your declarations are correct and complete.** Please let us know if there are any changes that need to be made.

## Housekeeping

Our ability to best represent you is based on quick and open communication. Once the legislative session progresses further, our requests for bill declarations will increase substantially. **We would ask that you let us know your organization's position on each bill within 24 hours of our notification to you so we can respond accordingly.**

## **Dates to Note**

- April 2: Second funnel deadline (Friday of the 12th week)
- April 30: 110th calendar day of the session; legislators' per diem expires

**Please feel free to contact the Advocacy Strategies Team with any questions, comments, or concerns. We are pleased to be representing your interests during the 2021 Legislative Session and throughout the year. Contact information for your lobbying team follows.**

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