



Legislative Update

The 2021 Iowa Legislative Session

Week of April 5th, 2021

This Week in the Iowa Legislature

This week the House and Senate both worked diligently to introduce budgets and quickly move them through the subcommittee and committee process. Both chambers are positioned to start passing their budget bills on the floor next week despite not having a joint budget target. They also worked to move their priority bills across the finish line focusing mostly on non-controversial bills. However there were a few exceptions in the Senate passed three controversial bills over to the House including an Abortion Constitutional Amendment, Voluntary Diversity Plans and Open Enrollment, and a Tax Omnibus bill.

Federal COVID Relief Funds

With the passage of the CARES Act last year and the American Rescue Plan (ARP) just recently, federal funds will begin flowing to the states to support numerous departments, services, and projects. The AS team met with the Governor's Office this week to learn more about how they are managing requests for the funding. Staff recommended waiting to request American Rescue Plan dollars until the state receives Federal guidance which is expected at the end of the month. Should you have questions or need assistance with an ARP funding request, please reach out to the AS team directly. Additionally, staff stated if there is an immediate need those requests can be put forth now.

Broadband Expansion

One week after the House unanimously passed [HF 848](#), the Governor's priority Broadband Expansion bill, the Senate followed their lead with a unanimous vote. The bill is designed to expand broadband connectivity and bring high-speed technology to more areas of Iowa, especially those places underserved or unserved. Currently, Iowa has the second-lowest broadband speeds in the country. Governor Reynolds has asked for \$450 million over three years to build out the broadband infrastructure and increase download and upload speeds in areas that fall short of the service although no agreement has been reached on funding. Meanwhile, House Republican leaders indicated \$100 million may be more realistic and Leader Prichard suggested the legislature appropriate enough to maximize matching federal funds. The Governor is expected to sign the bill.

Senate Passes their Priority Tax Bill

Tuesday evening brought with it a plethora of debate, including dissent over the largely controversial wide-ranging tax bill that would change how the state funds mental health, eliminate the backfill paid to local governments, accelerate tax cuts, increase state school aid, and eliminate several tax programs. Senate Republicans were met with major pushback from Senate Democrats and mental health advocacy groups alike when they offered a new way to fund mental health through a state appropriation rather than county property taxes. This move would set the stage for property tax relief while transitioning the funding source back to the State. Ultimately, [SF 587](#) was passed by a party line vote and is now moving to the House for consideration where its fate is unclear as overall budget and tax policy negotiations continue.

State Budget Update

The budget process started in earnest this week despite no announcement of a joint budget target. It typically takes approximately three weeks for the entire budget process to resolve itself after it begins. Below is a chart outlining each individual budget bill, its number, and where it is in the overall budget process. This chart will be updated each week until the legislature adjourns which is currently scheduled for April 30th.

Bill Number	Department	Status	Target
SF 594	Administration & Regulation	In SENATE 4/6	
HF867		In HOUSE 4/8	
HF 860	Agriculture & Natural Resources	In HOUSE 4/7	
SF 595	Economic Development	In SENATE 4/7	
LSB1003YA	Education	In HOUSE subcommittee 4/8	
N/A	Health & Human Services	Expected in the Senate this week	
HF 864	Judicial Branch	In HOUSE 4/7	
HF 861	Justice Systems	In HOUSE 4/7	
HF 862	Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund (RIIF)	In HOUSE 4/7	
SF 592	Transportation, Infrastructure, & Capitals	In SENATE 4/6	
HF 863		In HOUSE 4/7	
SSB 1257	Federal Block Grant Appropriations	In HOUSE 4/7	

House Republicans Propose an Increase for the Justice System Budget

After two staff members were attacked and killed by inmates late last month at the Anamosa State Penitentiary, Governor Reynolds vowed to conduct an external investigation into the attack in addition to an internal Department of Corrections review which she said will tell her if additional investments are needed in the system. This tragic loss was the catalyst to further discussion at the Statehouse during the Justice Systems budget hearing. The House Appropriations Committee approved a \$34.6 million increase to the proposed budget, \$20.5 million of that for state prison salaries and staffing. Democrats voted against the bill arguing the increase was inadequate. The increase is much contrary to Governor Reynolds' original budget recommendation in January. AFSCME, the state employees labor union, decried the increase as far too little and called for further protections for corrections officers. Senate Republicans have not yet released their proposed Justice Systems budget.

COVID-19 Vaccine Update

Vaccination appointments opened for all Iowans 16 or older on Monday (4/5) and Iowa realized our largest vaccine distribution to date. The state recently prioritized college students and young adults to ensure they are promptly vaccinated to help keep the virus activity low and manageable until a higher percentage of Iowans are fully vaccinated. Over 45,000 one-and-done doses were allocated for the younger population. However, due to manufacturing issues there will be a significant reduction in the one-shot Johnson & Johnson doses over the next few weeks, which will slow down the current progress.

Governor Reynolds stated Wednesday she plans to take executive or legislative action to prohibit the use of "vaccine passports" in Iowa. Although Reynolds has encouraged Iowans to get vaccinated as soon as possible, she stands firmly opposed to vaccine passports suggesting it would create a two-tiered society. At this time, the White House has said Americans will not be required to carry proof of vaccination, but Governor Reynolds is one of several Republican governors who are willing to issue an executive order to prohibit proof-of-vaccination requirements.

Currently, 1,683,624 doses have been administered to Iowa Residents, with 658,559 individuals who have completed their second dose of the two-dose vaccines. Meanwhile, another 53,189 residents have completed the one-and-done vaccine at this time. For those looking to schedule a vaccination appointment, the Iowa Department of Public Health announced vaccine navigators are available 7 days a week from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. to help eligible Iowans by calling 211 or (800) 244-7413. There are also translation services available. The CDC continues to maintain a case and [vaccine data tracker](#) which is updated daily.

Looking Ahead

Thirteen down, three to go! As we approach the final few weeks of session, we will continue to see a shift in energy in the building. It has officially transitioned to the *hurry up and wait* time of session for those inside and out of the chamber. In the coming weeks, we will continue to see the legislature keep busy with floor debate on priority pieces of legislation as we wait for leaders to finish negotiating the state budget. In addition to wrapping up appropriations work, the House and Senate still need to resolve differences on the pending tax bills. With per diems expiring on

April 30th, the 110th calendar day of session, we will likely see a push to ensure everything is wrapped up on time.

Key Initiatives this Week

The budget process has started in earnest this week despite no announcement of a joint budget target. In an effort to keep your budget requests top of mind, the AS team has continued to have conversations with the chairs of the budget subcommittees and Appropriations Committees in both chambers. We continue to be intimately involved in the process on your behalf and will keep you updated as negotiations between the Governor, House, and Senate continue. If you have any questions or concerns with the information we have shared thus far, please reach out to us directly. Additionally, please keep in mind they are just starting the process so these bills will change before they are sent to the Governor. If you have not yet directly reached out to the legislators who manage the budget where your appropriation resides, we would highly recommend you do that ASAP as it is essential they hear from you as well as us! Finally, it typically takes approximately three weeks for the entire budget process to resolve itself after it begins. Recognize this would suggest the legislature is on target to adjourn by the end of April.

Transportation, Infrastructure & Capitols (RIIF)

This week the House introduced and passed their version of the RIIF budget ([HF 862](#)) out of both subcommittee and committee. The bill appropriates just over \$255M from RIIF, the technology reinvestment fund, and \$35M in general funds. It allocates a little more than \$26M over the Governor's recommendations due to the REC increasing the gambling revenue projections. The goal of the House appropriators is to get funding levels back to FY20 – pre-pandemic levels. It was noted this bill is the starting point in negotiations with the Senate. It includes \$1.5M for Recreational Trails and \$5M for CAT Grants.

Agriculture and Natural Resources Budget

This week the House introduced and passed the Agriculture and Natural Resources budget ([HF 860](#)) through subcommittee and full committee without amendment. The bill incorporates the Governor's request of \$500K for establishing the Value Added Grant Program, adds an additional line item for State park cleanup, and appropriates \$11 million for renewable fuel efforts. Overall, the established budget items remain level funded. Representative Mommsen noted there has been little communication with the Senate and there is currently no agreed to budget target between the chambers. It includes \$12M for REAP and extends the program to 2026.

On Tuesday the Senate unanimously passed [HF 380](#), IBC's adding distracted driving to drivers education instructional requirements legislation, in a 44-0 vote. The bill previously passed the House in a 94-0 vote and now goes to the Governor for her consideration. The AS team has put in a request with the Governor's office for the bill to be signed into law and to have a bill signing. We will keep you updated as to their response.

On Wednesday the AS team touched base with Representative Kressig updating him on IBC's e-bike bill and how it will be coming back to the House with the class 3 e-bike speed limit amendment. Kressig said he had no issues with the bill as amended.

On Thursday IBC's e-bike legislation, [HF 493](#), was moved to the Senate's unfinished business calendar which is an indication the bill is on the list of bills eligible for consideration through the end of session. The AS team is asking Senate leadership to move the bill quickly as it must go back to the House for final consideration as amended.

Bills of Interest

Like sessions past, Advocacy Strategies continues to track 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 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. **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 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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