

Capitol Report

Iowa Legislature – Week Two

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Two weeks down... and only thirteen more to go! The Iowa Legislature is moving full speed ahead. Over 200 bills have been introduced so far this session. And while many of the bills that have been requested by legislators are still being drafted, the deadline for individual bill requests was last Friday (January 19). The pipeline of legislation that can be considered this session is already beginning to narrow.

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This past week, Department of Human Services Director Jerry Foxhoven appeared before two standing committees, drawing standing room only crowds. In the Senate Human Resources Committee, Foxhoven acknowledged there have been problems transitioning the Medicaid program to managed care, but he said “I’m going to make it work.... we’re down the managed-care course at this point, and that’s where we’re going to stay.” The high-profile death of two teenage girls in foster care was the focus of his testimony in the Joint Government Oversight Committee. Foxhoven outlined the changes he has made in the state’s child welfare system since he became director just seven months ago.

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Earlier this month ICN Director Ric Lumbard was fired from his job. This past week an audit released by State Auditor Mary Mossiman reported he misspent nearly \$380,000 of taxpayers’ money. According to the report, Lumbard made a number of management decisions that were not in the “taxpayer’s best interest” including improper disbursements, undeposited collections, and “awarding unusually large pay increases” to certain individuals within the agency. The ICN is the state agency that provides high-speed broadband Internet, data, video conferencing and phone services to Iowa schools, colleges, hospitals, libraries and other entities.

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Back again this year is legislation to restrict or ban the use of traffic cameras. Three bills have already been considered in different subcommittees and all are moving forward in the process. Two (HSB 512 and SSB 3025) would ban speed and traffic cameras, as well as any local ordinances permitting them. The cameras currently in use in eight Iowa cities and one county would need to be dismantled by July 1 under these proposals. The other bill (SF 220) would not ban them outright but would impose new regulatory requirements/restrictions on their use.

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Legislative proposals by two of the state’s highest elected officials were also introduced this week. Attorney General Tom Miller has offered a bill (HSB 526) that would make changes to Iowa’s data security and breach notification laws. State Treasurer Mike Fitzgerald is proposing legislation (HSB 548) to create a state run retirement savings plan trust.

In The News

Jacob Bossman, the Republican candidate and staffer to U.S. Senator Charles Grassley, won the special election last Tuesday to fill House District 6 (Sioux City area) seat. Representative Ken Rizer, who represents House District 68 (Marion area), announced he will not be seeking re-election this fall. Senator Nate Boulton came in third amongst Democratic candidates in the amount he's raised in his bid to become Iowa's next governor, according to reports filed this past week. Also Representative Chip Baltimore (Republican from Boone) was picked up for drunk driving and possession of a firearm while intoxicated.

Week Ahead

You can expect a lot of activity on legislation of interest this week. Watch your email for notices of meetings as they're scheduled and reports on what's happening with legislation we are tracking.