



REPRESENTATIVE CINDY GOLDING
IOWA HOUSE DISTRICT 83

UNDER THE GOLDEN DOME:

This Week at the Capitol:

Summary of Students First Act (Education Savings Account)

There is so much misinformation surrounding this topic that I have summarized the bill below. Just as you are, I am very concerned about our small towns and rural school districts. I researched the bill and studied the potential impact on our small school districts. I also heard from many parents who are concerned about the values and "woke" agenda being taught to their children, even here in District 83. This new law (HF68) continues to fund our public schools, increasing funding in certain areas, giving them more flexibility, while offering a choice to parents, regardless of their financial situation.

<p>Currently - a student leaves public school to attend an <u>accredited</u> private school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Public school receives \$0 	<p>New law- a student leaves public school to attend an <u>accredited</u> private school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The public school continues to receive the \$7,598 the first year the student enrolls in the <u>accredited</u> private school • The Public school receives \$1,206 every subsequent year the student is in the ESA program
<p>Currently -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding is restricted to specific programs, • School districts in House District 83 have nearly \$4.4 million of residual, unspent funds. 	<p>New Law</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unspent dollars in the Program-specific funds are now available for the districts to use for other teacher benefits. • In FY 2023 over \$23 Million dollars will become available for Teacher benefits among the 11 Linn County school districts .
<p>Currently - If No accredited private school in the area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public school receives all State funds • Public school receives all Federal and local tax dollars 	<p>New Law - No accredited private school in the area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public school receives all State funds • Public school receives all Federal and local tax dollars

Some other details about the Students First Act:

- No tax-payer funding for transportation to private schools
- No tax-payer funding for private school teachers benefits (IPERS, Medical Insurance etc)
- No tax-payer funding for facilities or sports programs at private schools
- Students with disabilities continue to be served by AEA (funding goes with student not institution)
- Small rural schools continue to receive transportation and other supplemental funding.
- **FYI** - The State of Iowa has a long history of funding private schools under both Democrat and Republican administrations. For decades Tax-payer funds have gone to private colleges and universities through the Iowa Tuition Grant program.

Another concern has been the cost.

House Republicans have a well-earned reputation at the Capitol for being very cautious when it comes to the state budget. Iowa’s fiscal situation is very strong. With this bill, **we have done our due diligence** and determined that this program can fit within the long-term budget and not impact other state programs such as public safety, Medicaid, mental health, and future increases in the school funding formula.

FY 2023-FY 2027 (4 years) HF68 cost = \$900 Million for tuition assistance

FY 2023-FY 2027 (4 years) **Education Budget = \$15.9 BILLION** to public schools

HF 3 – Ensuring Iowa’s Welfare Program Remains Available for Eligible Iowans.

The intent is to ensure that Iowa’s welfare programs are sustainable and in compliance with the federal government. On July 30, 2019, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) notified the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) that the Department was not in compliance. As a result, the legislature is correcting the reporting issues and strengthening the support to Iowans in need of assistance.

Iowa’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) was designed to emphasize healthy foods, the bill, HF3, will be amended to simply prohibit candy and sodas. It will no longer be tied to the WIC program.

Thank you to all who contacted me about this issue. Please continue to monitor legislation and let me know when you see a problem.

Local Government

Volunteer EMS and Firefighters

Many Iowans have sacrificed and volunteered to ensure that fellow Iowans are cared for. Volunteer emergency medical care providers, firefighters, and reserve peace officers work diligently to assist their communities in time of needs. These volunteers are often first on the scene to provide medical care, fight fires, and during the pandemic to help distribute PPE supplies in their communities.

We are committed to improving Emergency Medical Services throughout the state by authorizing municipalities, counties, townships, or agencies to implement length of service agreement awards as described in 457(e) (11) of the Internal Revenue Code for volunteer firefighters and emergency medical care providers. The Local Government Committee has reintroduced [House Study Bill 19](#) to create a grant program to allow municipalities to provide an award to volunteer firefighters, emergency medical care providers, and reserve peace officers. The grant would provide up to \$1 for \$1 match in funding for municipalities that have established the award.

Authorizing local governments to establish these programs if they chose to, can give control to local governments to provide incentives for volunteers in communities in need of emergency services.

State Government

State Government Moves Line of Succession Amendment

This week the State Government Committee passed several bills as the legislature moves forward with session. The committee passed [House Study Bill 37](#), a proposed Constitutional amendment to clarify and update the line of succession for the office of Governor. Article IV, Section 17 of the Iowa Constitution says that in the case there is a vacancy in the Office of Governor, that the powers and duties of the governor devolve upon the Lieutenant Governor. Following the appointment of Governor Branstad as the Ambassador to China there has been legal debate over the line of gubernatorial succession and what that means for filling vacancies and powers of the office.

In 2009, when Democrats controlled both chambers of the legislature and the governor's office, they amended Iowa Code to say that "An appointment by the governor to fill a vacancy in the office of lieutenant governor shall be for the balance of the unexpired term." However, in 2017 when Governor Branstad resigned, Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller issued a legal opinion that Kim Reynolds would assume the powers and duties of Governor, but she did not have the authority to appoint a new Lieutenant Governor. In 2018 Governor Reynolds won her election with appointed Lt. Governor Adam Gregg and both were reelected in 2022.

Amendments to the Iowa Constitution are required to pass both legislative chambers in consecutive general assemblies. The 89th General Assembly passed the amendment and the language will need to again pass both chambers this year in order to appear on the ballot for the voters of Iowa to decide in November 2024.

Veterans Affairs

Presentation from the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs

Last week, Commandant Jacobus of the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs presented to the House Veterans Affairs Committee. The Department contains three sections to assist Iowa veterans: Veterans Benefits Bureau at Camp Dodge, the Iowa Veterans Home in Marshalltown, and the Iowa Veterans Cemetery in Van Meter.

Commandant Jacobus presented that the Iowa Veterans Home has maintained its 5-Star Rating, providing residential and nursing care to Iowa veterans and spouses. There are currently 384 residents of the nursing home with over 800 staff.

The Department has made it a priority to improve communication with Iowa's 99 County Veteran Service Officers and is working to build up internal capacity to provide training and assistance to ensure Iowa veterans receive the benefits they deserve.

Be a Poll Worker:

It takes around 10,000 Iowans to staff polling places for a statewide election. 2023 isn't a general election year, but several counties have local elections on March 7, and the statewide city-school elections take place this November. County auditors are constantly looking for more people to serve. Poll workers check-in voters, answer questions, and help ensure elections run smoothly in each precinct. It's a great way to serve your state and nation, and you get paid! State law requires a bipartisan balance of poll workers at each precinct. To learn more, visit [Pollworker.Iowa.gov](https://www.pollworker.iowa.gov).



iJAG students (O.J. Payne, Ali Monaghan, and Jayda Booth) from Prairie High School.



Cedar Rapids Fire Fighter, Paul Bagby-Iowa Professional Fire Fighters Day on the Hill.



Governor Kim Reynolds signs House File 68.



Many groups from home visited the Capitol this week.