

agingWATCH



2015 Legislative Session opens with traditional pomp and circumstance

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Did you know? Fun facts about Iowa Legislators

The first session of Iowa's 86th General Assembly opened Monday, Jan. 12, in a ceremonial tone typical of the legislature. Amidst the formalities, members of both the House of Representatives and the Senate were selected for leadership roles and the parties outlined their priorities for the session (see page 4 of this publication for additional details).

Many of the introductory remarks included references to bipartisanship, which was a major theme of Governor Terry Branstad's Condition of the State Address on Tuesday.

During the speech to members of Iowa's legislative and judicial branches, as well as a number of distinguished guests and the media, Gov. Branstad presented his administration's plan to focus on improving the state's infrastructure; create safe and secure schools and communities; revitalize parks, trails and museums; and increase government transparency.

Of particular interest to advocates for older Iowans were the governor's remarks regarding the strengthening of Iowa's domestic abuse laws and the implementation of the IowaNext Plan,

which seeks to help employers attract workers to Iowa by investing in quality of life initiatives across the state.

Iowa's Domestic Abuse Act defines domestic abuse to include assault between family or household members who live together or have lived together within the past year. This definition is important, as most cases of elder abuse are perpetrated by others the older adult knows and trusts – particularly family members – according to the National Center on Elder Abuse. Potential changes to Iowa's domestic abuse laws could impact the manner in which cases of elder abuse are addressed.

Increasing the safety and well-being of older Iowans complements Gov. Branstad's IowaNext Plan, which strives to make Iowa the premier state in which to live and retire. An investment in Iowa's parks, trails, lakes, museums and other recreational facilities will benefit all Iowans, including those over the age of 65 who make up more than 15 percent of the state's population.

The Iowa Department on Aging looks forward to bringing readers continued coverage of the 2015 Legislative Session.

SENATOR ERNST TO DELIVER GOP STATE OF THE UNION REBUTTAL



Freshman U.S. Senator Joni Ernst of Iowa has been chosen to deliver the Republican party's rebuttal speech to President Barack Obama's State of the Union Address tonight, Jan. 20.

In announcing their selection of Sen. Ernst, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., and House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, emphasized her commitment to creating jobs and strengthening the economy and suggested her remarks would focus on GOP efforts to address the needs of middle-class families.

The only other Iowan to ever give the opposition party's rebuttal to the State of the Union Address was Sen. Tom Harkin 1984 after President Ronald Reagan's speech.

UPCOMING EVENTS

PUBLIC DIALOGUE: OFFICE OF SUBSTITUTE DECISION MAKER

Friday, Feb. 6, 2015
9-10:30 a.m.
Iowa State Bar Association CLE Room
625 E. Court Ave., Des Moines

IOWA COMMISSION ON AGING MEETING

Friday, Feb. 6, 2015
10:30 a.m.
Iowa State Bar Association CLE Room
625 E. Court Ave., Des Moines

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS



AgingWatch welcomes comments and suggestions from readers. If errors are brought to our attention, we will attempt to correct them. Messages can be emailed to kimberly.murphy@iowa.gov.

2015 Iowa Legislative Session timetable

(Session timetable is subject to change)

JANUARY 12:
First day of session
Iowa Code Sec. 2.1

FEBRUARY 13 (Friday of the 5th Week):
Final day for individual Senator and Representative requests for bill drafts to the Legislative Services Agency
Senate Rule 27 and House Rule 29

MARCH 6 (Friday of the 8th Week):
Final day for Senate bills to be reported out of Senate committees and House Bills out of House committees
Joint Rule 20

MARCH 16-20 (10th Week):
Senate only considers Senate bills and unfinished business; House only considers House bills and unfinished business
Joint Rule 20

MARCH 23 – APRIL 3 (11th and 12th Weeks):
Debate not limited by rule

APRIL 3 (Friday of the 12th Week):
Final day for Senate bills to be reported out of House committees and House bills out of Senate committees
Joint Rule 20

APRIL 6-10 (13th Week):
Senate only considers House bills and unfinished business; House only considers Senate bills and unfinished business
Joint Rule 20

APRIL 13 (Beginning of the 14th Week):
Amendments need not be filed on the day preceding floor debate
House Rule 31.8

Primarily, only the following bills are eligible for consideration:

- Bills passed by both Houses
- Appropriations Bills

Joint Rule 20

MAY 1 (110th Calendar Day of the Session):
Per diem expenses end
Iowa Code Sec. 2.10(1)

Bills to watch this Legislative Session

Just one week into the 2015 Iowa Legislative Session, the Iowa Department on Aging is already monitoring several bills introduced in the legislature. The following list includes bills that have been identified as potentially impactful for older Iowans, Iowans with disabilities and/or their caregivers.

More information about any of the bills can be found by clicking on the bill number and following the hyperlink to the Iowa Legislature's online BillBook (www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/billTracking). This resource posts all versions of bills and amendments, resolutions, study bills, bill histories and fiscal notes and includes sponsor information.



Iowa House of Representatives

- HF 9** **Insurance Premiums for Older Drivers.** *Requires the Department of Transportation, in consultation with the Department of Public Safety, to establish a certified driver safety education course to be offered throughout the state. A person who successfully completes the course shall be issued a certificate. The Commissioner of Insurance shall require insurers to provide a 10 percent automobile insurance premium reduction for persons 55 years of age or older who have obtained a certificate within the last three years.*
- HF 24** **Camping Fees for Older Iowans.** *Directs the Natural Resources Commission to reduce fees for camping and other special privileges for residents who are 60 years of age or older.*
- HSB 40** **Disabled Veteran Homestead Credit.** *Amends eligibility criteria for the disabled veteran homestead tax credit to include additional categories of veterans with disabilities to qualify for the credit.*

Iowa Senate

- SF 2** **Veterans Home Eligibility.** *Provides additional eligibility to spouses of living veterans who are not members of the Iowa Veterans Home. To be eligible, such a spouse is required to have been married to the veteran for at least 10 years, be disabled and meet the qualifications for nursing or residential levels of care.*
- SF 3** **Parking for Persons with Disabilities.** *Requires that an approved driver education course include classroom instruction relating to the rights, privileges and penalties associated with parking for persons with disabilities.*
- SF 21** **Insurance Proceeds.** *Provides that a person convicted of certain felonies perpetrated against a decedent in the six months immediately prior to the decedent's death is not entitled, as a named beneficiary, to any benefit under a bond, policy or other contractual arrangement, and the benefits become payable as though the person causing death had predeceased the decedent. Exception by affidavit.*
- SF 34** **Disabled Veteran Homestead Credit.** *Amends eligibility criteria for the disabled veteran homestead tax credit to include additional categories of veterans with disabilities to qualify for the credit.*

SENATE STUDY BILLS
1001 AND 1020
HAVE BEEN SET FOR
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
WEDNESDAY, JAN. 21.

- SSB 1001** **Dementia Proficient Workforce Taskforce.** *Requires the Departments of Public Health, Aging, Human Services and Inspections and Appeals to form a taskforce to review dementia curricula and training models. Report due in November 2015.*
- SSB 1020** **Prescription Drug Abuse.** *Requires a pharmacist or prescribing practitioner to obtain information about a patient from the information program for drug prescribing and dispensing if the pharmacist or prescribing practitioner believes or has reason to believe the patient is at risk of drug diversion, misuse or abuse.*

- SSB 1024** **Guardianship and Conservatorship Petition.** *Amends the current law so a combined petition for a conservatorship and a guardianship is treated as one proceeding, with one docket number.*

Leaders of the 86th Iowa General Assembly announced

Iowa House of Representatives



Speaker:

Kraig Paulsen (R)

District 67

(515) 281-3221

kraig.paulsen@legis.iowa.gov

Elected by the majority party caucus and confirmed by the entire House of Representatives, the Speaker is the presiding officer of the House, calling the chamber to order and deciding all questions of order and rule relative to procedure.



Speaker Pro Tempore:

Matt W. Windschitl (R)

District 17

(515) 281-3221

matt.windschitl@legis.iowa.gov

The Speaker Pro Tempore is selected by the majority party. The primary role is to assume the duties of Speaker if the Speaker is absent.



Majority Leader:

Linda L. Upmeyer (R)

District 54

(515) 281-3221

linda.upmeyer@legis.iowa.gov

Elected by the majority party members of the House, the Majority Leader serves as the floor leader of the majority party and, with the Speaker, serves as the caucus spokesperson in various forums. The Majority Leader also assists the Speaker in structuring the chamber agenda, assigning members to committees and leading action on the floor.



Minority Leader:

Mark D. Smith (D)

District 71

(515) 281-3221

mark.smith@legis.iowa.gov

Elected by the minority party members of the House, the Minority Leader serves as caucus spokesperson, recommends committee assignments and ensures minority party's views are presented on the floor.

Iowa Senate



President:

Pam Jochum (D)

District 50

(515) 281-5933

pam.jochum@legis.iowa.gov

Chosen by the majority party members then formally elected by the entire Senate, the President is the presiding officer of the chamber, calling the Senate to order and deciding all questions of order and rule relative to procedure.



President Pro Tempore:

Steven J. Soddors (D)

District 36

(641) 754-6380

steve.soddors@legis.iowa.gov

The President Pro Tempore is selected by the majority party. The primary role is to assume the duties of President if the President is absent.



Majority Leader:

Michael E. Gronstal (D)

District 8

(515) 281-4610

mike.gronstal@legis.iowa.gov

Elected by the majority party members of the Senate, the Majority Leader oversees construction of a legislative agenda, serves as caucus spokesperson, issues debate and committee schedules, assigns members to committees and, with the Senate President, appoints committee chairs.



Minority Leader:

Bill Dix (R)

District 25

(319) 269-3664

bill.dix@legis.iowa.gov

Elected by the minority party members of the Senate, the Minority Leader serves as caucus spokesperson, recommends committee assignments and ensures minority party's views are presented on the floor.

Condition of the Judiciary Address includes nod to guardianship roles



In his Condition of the Judiciary Address on Jan. 14, Iowa Supreme Court Chief Justice Mark Cady talked about improving Iowa's judicial system to reduce racial disparities, increase courthouse security and digitalize the court's legal documents.

The speech, given to a joint session of the Iowa Legislature, also pointed out recent improvement to the state's juvenile court system, family treatment courts and civil litigation system and included a nod to the emerging role that guardians and conservators play in helping Iowa's most vulnerable populations, including older adults, access justice.

With a goal of developing improvements and new safeguards for the services provided to Iowans who need help making decisions regarding their personal care, safety or finances, Chief Justice Cady announced, "We are

convening a commission of experts to review existing guardianship and conservatorship laws and procedures."

"Right now," he explained, "our court system oversees more than 22,000 active guardianship or conservatorship cases. Each person in each case deserves the best care possible. The project is under the leadership of Justice Bruce Zager of Waterloo, and the task force will include faculty from Iowa's two outstanding law schools."

As the Iowa Department on Aging continues to advocate on behalf of older adults' access to and awareness of substitute decision makers and strives to implement standards across the state that ensure the quality of services provided, Chief Justice Cady's call for a guardianship/conservatorship reform committee will be something worth watching this session.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Iowa Senate has 50 members while the Iowa House of Representatives has 100 members. Of those elected:

- 34 legislators are women and 115 are men.
- Republicans control the House, 56 to 43, and Democrats control the Senate, 26 to 24.
- The freshman class of the 86th General Assembly includes 15 members of the House of Representatives and six members of the Senate.
- At 24, Jake Highfill, (R) Johnston, is the youngest member of the Iowa Legislature, while Wally Horn, (D) Cedar Rapids, is the oldest at 81.
- When they are not at the Capitol, 11 Iowa senators list their occupation as "Farmer."

To learn more about any legislator, including how to contact them, which committees they serve on or which legislation they are sponsoring, visit the Iowa Legislature website (www.legis.iowa.gov).



AgingWatch is provided in the spirit of information and education. The opinions expressed by the contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the Iowa Department on Aging or its programs. The Iowa Department on Aging shall not be liable for any damages that may result from errors or omissions in information distributed in this publication.



510 E. 12th Street, Ste. 2 | Des Moines, IA 50319 | www.iowaaging.gov

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