



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF IOWA

LEGISLATIVE NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2009



Content of this letter is provided by the LWVIA Lobbyist Judie Hoffman: judiehoffman@yahoo.com

FEBRUARY 18 FOR LWVIA LOBBY DAY

COME TO THE CAPITOL FEBRUARY 18 FOR LWVIA LOBBY DAY

Make sure to reserve **Wednesday, February 18** to come to Des Moines for League Lobby Day. The day will start at

- **9:30 AM** with coffee at Calvary Baptist Church at 606 E. 9th Street, just a block from the Capitol.
- **At 9:45**, we will start to hear updates on LWVIA priorities from key legislators. Parking is limited at the church, but additional parking is available across the street at the Republican Headquarters.
- **Next** we will move to the Capitol for lunch and an opportunity to meet with legislators and to attend committee meetings. Talk to your legislators in advance and plan to have lunch with them if possible. This is a wonderful opportunity to get informed and updated on issues.
- If enough people are interested, I can arrange for a guided tour of the Capitol in the afternoon. I will need to know of your interest in advance. judiehoffman@yahoo.com

2009 Session Timetable

January 12	First Day
Feb. 20	Last day for individual legislator to request bill drafts
March 13	Final day for Senate bills to come out of Senate committees Final day for House bills to come out of House committees
March 23-27	Senate considers only Senate bills House considers only House bills
April 10	Final date for House bills to come out of Senate Committees and Senate bills to come out of House committees
May 1	Last day legislators are paid a per diem (unless the Legislature decides to shorten session to save money)

Legislative Committee assignments for 2009-2010 are posted on the LWVIA site at <http://www.lwvia.org>

IOWA EXPECTED TO LOSE A SEAT IN CONGRESS IN 2010

According to 2008 census estimates released last month, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania will lose a seat in Congress in 2010 according to Election Data Services, Inc.

FLOOD RECOVERY AND FLOOD PREVENTION

There will be much talk about flood recovery at the Capitol this year, but Legislators are not saying much about preventing future floods. **Tell your elected officials that one of League's priorities is to have the state implement better land management practices to mitigate or prevent future flooding. Ask them what they are doing to provide future protection.**

- Develop flood plain maps for the entire state
- Encourage better watershed management practices
- Encourage use of cover crops that maximize infiltration
- Enforce existing soil conservation requirements

BUDGET CUTS HERE AND BUDGET CUTS THERE ADD UP TO BIG CUTS

Governor Culver and Iowa Legislators will be spending a lot of time working on budgets this session. It will be a hot topic and they will be faced with difficult decisions. This is not just an Iowa problem. Forty-three other states are facing similar problems, many much greater than those of Iowa.

Late last year Governor Culver made initial cuts of \$77 million in the 2009 budget (July 1, 2009-June 30, 2009), and recently he announced across the board cuts of 1.5% in all areas of state spending starting January 1. The latter will save an additional \$91.4 million. Culver's hope is that these cuts will be enough to balance the budget for the current year, but because the state must have a balanced budget, the Legislature may be called on to make further cuts.

January 13, Gov. Culver will present his Condition of the State address to the Legislature. Because the estimated revenue for 2010 is lower than 2009, the governor will have to present a budget that is even lower than the reduced 2009 budget. That will not be easy since there are a number of built in increases such as funding for K-12 education, state salaries, funding to counties and Medicaid.

PREDATORY LENDING AND CONSUMER RIGHT OF ACTION

With the economy in bad shape, there couldn't be a better time for the Iowa Legislature to work on these two issues. When Iowans are short of money and are turning to pay day lenders (PDL), they need protection from high interest rates. We are not asking for PDL to be closed. **We are just asking that interest on loans made in Iowa be capped at 36%.** That is the same interest rate the federal government allows PDL to charge members of the military. Presently some PDL are charging as much as 400% on a two week loan.

Pay day loans were meant to be used for one time emergencies. In reality only 1% of loans are made to one time borrowers. The average borrower in Iowa takes out an average of 12 loans a year. We have gone from 144 Iowa licensed locations in 2002 to 277 in 2007.

Iowa is the only state that doesn't. Residents do not have the right to sue a person or business that they feel has wrong them. This includes insurance fraud and unscrupulous acts committed by home improvement contractors and used car dealers. Iowans have no direct legal remedy.

Only the Iowa Attorney General's office can bring a lawsuit, but they cannot handle the over 6,000 claims they receive each year. The only recourse is called a "common law fraud" which is a more difficult case to prove and there is no provision to recoup attorney fees.

WHAT YOU CAN DO –Contact your elected officials immediately and let them know we need changes in Iowa.



LWVIA PRIORITIES FOR 2009

PRIMARY PRIORITIES

PREVENT FUTURE FLOODING BY BETTER LAND MANAGEMENT

LWVIA supports the promotion, enforcement, and funding of conservation policies that control erosion, improve water quality and help prevent flooding.

PROTECT IOWANS FROM PREDATORY LENDING and CONSUMER FRAUD

LWVIA encourages the Iowa Legislature to pass legislation to cap interest rates on payday loans (can be over 400% on a 14 day loan) and to allow Iowa consumers to sue when they think they have been scammed or defrauded. Iowa is the only state in the country where an individual cannot sue under the state’s Consumer Fraud Act.

IMPLEMENT IMMIGRATION REFORM

LWVIA urges the Iowa Legislature to support legislation that provides:

- Penalties for employers who hire unauthorized workers
- Due process for all persons including the right to a fair hearing, right to counsel, right of appeal, and right to humane treatment
- Increased funding for English language classes.

REFORM SENTENCING AND CORRECTION

LWVIA encourages the Iowa Legislative to:

- Consider recommendations from the Criminal Code Reorganization Committee report, especially those that address proportionality in sentences,
- Fund more community based correction programs and programs that facilitate prisoner reentry into the community,
- Fund more programs that provide treatment for the special needs offender.

SECONDARY PRIORITIES

RETURNABLE BEVERAGE CONTAINER LEGISLATION (BOTTLE BILL)

LWVIA supports expanding deposits on beverage containers to promote recycling, reuse and litter reduction. We also support expanding the handling fee paid to redemption centers from 1 cent to 2 cents.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

LWVIA will work for improved methods of financing political campaigns in Iowa in order to ensure the public’s right to know, to combat undue influence, and to promote citizen participation in the political process.

HOW TO MAKE CONTACT WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS

When you **e-mail** legislators, make sure to include your name and address so the legislator knows you live in her or his district. The generic form of e mail address for legislators is: type the first name, put a period, type the last name of the legislator, then @legis.state.ia.us. Example: Mark.Davitt@legis.state.ia.us Also, you can link with them through the Legislative Web Site at www.legis.state.ia.us .

Phone calls:

Governor’s Office515 281 5211 or email at: contact.igov@iowa.gov
 Senate Switchboard515 281 3371
 House of Representatives Switchboard515 281 3221