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**Week in Review**

The second week of session was cut short due to the observance of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday and the blizzard-like conditions the state experienced Tuesday into Wednesday. Appropriation subcommittees had their initial meetings and presentations from the Legislative Services Agency (LSA) staff regarding the Governor's proposed budget. Additionally, several subcommittees met this week to consider the first round of bills filed by legislators

**House Committee Special Announcement on IPERS**

The House State Government committee had a presentation from Iowa Public Employees' Retirement System CEO Donna Mueller. Mueller provided the committee an update on the public employee pension program. The presentation gave an overview of the program in addition to the unfunded liabilities of the system. Last session, the Senate introduced a bill that would have changed the program from a defined-benefit pension plan to a self-saving retirement plan, similar to 401ks.

After the presentation, Representative Bobby Kauffman, republican Chair of the committee unequivocal promised the House Republicans would make no changes to the program. He said there wouldn't even be a "comma added" this year or next year (the 2020 legislative session). This special announcement was in response to campaign ads/mailers accusing republicans of "taking IPERS away." This cemented the point that both Governor Reynolds and House Speaker Linda Upmeyer committed to "no changes" to IPERS prior to the November 2018 election

Kauffman said that several labor unions have been pushing falsehoods that changes to Iowa's pension program would be happening. His message to these unions was clear: "All these groups that are pushing out this crap, after today what you are doing will be completely deceitful, so I want to make it crystal clear," Kaufmann said. "Republicans never had intentions of taking away or substantively changing your IPERS and going forward over the next two years unequivocally there will be none." Additionally, he said, "It is absolute that after today, any group that sends out the email scaring our constituents, I'm going to publicly call you a liar."

**Senate Committee Considers Changes to Iowa's Bottle Bill**

The first "bottle bill" was considered during a Senate subcommittee meeting this week. The bill, filed by Senator Mark Segebart (R- Carroll), would require grocery stores and convenience stores exit the redemption business. The bill would also raise the fee paid solely by distributors to recycling or "redemption" centers from one penny to two pennies out of the five cent deposit on each can.

Several groups were in attendance, some supportive and others opposed; these groups included distributors, bottlers, the Sierra Club, Grocers Association and many more. The bill passed its first hurdle and was voted out of subcommittee 2-1, with the promise from Senator Rozenboom to work with all stakeholders.

### **Reynolds Computer Education in Grade Schools**

This week, Governor Reynolds announced a new computer science initiative for grade schools. Funds totaling \$350,000 has been raised and 6 schools will receive a \$50,000 grant. The Loess Hills Computer Programming School in Sioux City will receive \$50,000 to serve as a project resource and consultant.

The STEM Advisory Council and the DOE have partnered with businesses to make awards to six elementary schools across Iowa with the computer instruction grants. The schools will be selected in each of the six STEM Council regions and eligible school systems will have at least one school with at least 40% of the students qualifying for free lunches. Reynolds said that the program will offer students opportunities to learn new, basic skills. She said that the six chosen schools will also serve as a statewide resource for teaching computer science in grade school.

### **House District 55 Contested Election Update**

The House Contest Committee for Iowa House District 55 race met again on Thursday. Kayla Koether, who lost by nine votes to Representative Bergan, is contesting the seat. Last week, the Committee heard from Koether and Bergan's attorneys. This week, Representative Holt said the 29 sealed absentee ballots that are in dispute will not be opened. Representative Holt said that the committee "lacks the legal authority" to open the ballots because the bar code printed on the envelopes does not meet the criteria to be considered an intelligent bar code, as required by law. The Committee will also not take testimony from the 29 affected voters. The Committee approved of a report supporting these findings on Thursday. Democrats are expected to file a minority report.

### **In the News**

1. [Bill Limits Where Consumers Can Take Bottles and Increases Fees](#)
2. [JD Scholten Launches Non-Profit and Doesn't Dismiss 2020 Run](#)
3. [Grassley: Doesn't Expect There are Enough Votes in Senate to End Shut Down](#)
4. [Eastern Iowa Airport Sets Passenger Record](#)
5. [Cannabis Board Considers Autism Addition to Iowa's List of Conditions](#)
6. [Iowa's Fetal Heartbeat Bill Declared Unconstitutional](#)