

## Legislative News

**\*\* Recap of the 2007 Legislative Session \*\***

May 7, 2007

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### LEAD TESTING FOR CHILDREN

A bill requiring children to receive a blood test by age six, or prior to enrollment in an elementary school, was passed by the legislature and signed by the governor. The requirement may be waived if it is determined that the child is of very low risk for elevated blood lead levels, or if the child's parent or guardian submits an affidavit stating that the blood lead testing conflicts with a genuine and sincere religious belief.

Lead poisoning is an issue that has been of concern to Iowa PTA for decades. The effects of lead poisoning include mental retardation, hearing loss, disorientation, lack of physical balance, behavioral disorders and even death. Testing assists health officials in determining the source of lead contamination and ensures the safety of children currently living in the home and any who may occupy that same home in the future.

View the bill at: <http://coolice.legis.state.ia.us/Cool-ICE/default.asp?category=billinfo&Service=Billbook&ga=82&hbill=HF158>

### TOBACCO TAX INCREASE

An increase in the tobacco tax of one dollar per pack was passed by the legislature and signed by the governor. Iowa's tobacco tax of \$1.36 per pack of cigarettes takes Iowa from having one of the lowest taxes in the country to 17<sup>th</sup> in the nation. The bill also included an increase for cigars and moist snuff. The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids estimates there will be a 19.3 percent reduction in youth smoking as a result of the tax hike. Iowa PTA supported the tobacco tax increase on that basis.

### ANTI-BULLYING

The anti-bullying bill was passed by the legislature and has been signed by the governor. This legislation requires school districts to have anti-bullying policies and implement training for staff, students and volunteers on bullying prevention. It also requires that a copy of the policy be made available to all school employees, volunteers, students, and parents or guardians. PTAs can help by assisting the school in its efforts to make parents and guardians aware of the policy. Your PTA may want to plan a program regarding the district's policy and the procedures for reporting and investigating incidences of bullying or harassment.

To view the bill, go to:  
<http://coolice.legis.state.ia.us/Cool-ICE/default.asp?Category=billinfo&Service=Billbook&menu=false&hbill=SF61>

### KEG BILL

Iowa PTA was pleased that the keg registration bill passed this year. The bill requires an identification number on each keg of beer and that the purchase is recorded. The purpose is to hold adults responsible for providing beer kegs to minors. The passage of this legislation is largely due to the collaborative efforts of high school youth throughout Iowa, spearheaded by young people like Tim Carr of Lamoni. Their persistence and dedication were an inspiration.

View the bill at: <http://coolice.legis.state.ia.us/Cool-ICE/default.asp?Category=billinfo&Service=Billbook&menu=false&ga=82&hbill=HF650>

## A BANNER YEAR FOR AFTERSCHOOL

The Iowa Afterschool Alliance membership worked incredibly hard this year to ensure their legislators knew about the need for afterschool and the IAA's recommendation that the General Assembly appropriate \$4 million for afterschool in Iowa. And your hard work paid off tremendously! The IAA is thrilled to report that \$3.5 million will be available for afterschool!

Legislators voted this year to make \$1 million available for grants for afterschool. In addition, \$2.5 million of new funding was appropriated for supplemental educational strategies that schools can use to ensure kids are keeping up with their peers academically. Before and afterschool programs are mentioned as a specific example of such a strategy in the legislation. The Governor has 30 days to sign all passed legislation. Final enrolled bills are not yet posted on the Legislative website. This information is to the best of our knowledge.

The \$1 million came from three sources: the Healthy Iowans Tobacco Trust, the Education budget, and the Standings bill. However, Code has been written to allow these funds to be pooled into a single stream to be administered by the Iowa Department of Education. We anticipate an RFP to be released by the Department this summer. Last year's \$150,000 was awarded in three grants of \$50,000, and the RFP called for programs with strong community collaboration and a plan for sustainability.

The \$2.5 million is an entirely new funding source, and time will tell how it may be administered. Preliminary information suggests that schools/districts themselves would be the applicants. However, community-based programs would likely also qualify if they work in partnership with a school to improve student achievement through tutoring, homework help, or other types of academic activities. We would encourage any program who is interested in this funding source to ensure that school superintendents and administrators are well aware now of the value of their programs and how they support student learning so that partnerships and support are solidified before the RFP is released.

Many, many of you contacted your legislators before and during the session, which obviously made an impact. Just as important, we ask that you take a few moments and send a note of thanks to them now. Hand-written notes are much appreciated by legislators. Their home addresses are listed on the legislative webpage: [www.legis.state.ia.us](http://www.legis.state.ia.us).

Finally, a big, big thank you to all of you for your advocacy efforts. Because of your hard work—many of you for several years now—afterschool will be more available, accessible, and affordable for thousands more kids and families this year. If you'd like to be involved with the Iowa Afterschool Alliance's Policy Work Group, please contact Rachel Scott at [rscott@sppg.com](mailto:rscott@sppg.com) or Kevin Koester at [kkoester@ankeny.k12.ia.us](mailto:kkoester@ankeny.k12.ia.us).

*- from the Iowa Afterschool Alliance*

Federal funding for afterschool programs is critical to keeping these programs going in Iowa. We urge you to contact your U.S. congressmen and ask them to support increased funding for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century community Learning Centers program, the largest federal program dedicated primarily to afterschool programs. To find your U.S. congressmen go to:

<http://capwiz.com/npta2/dbq/officials/>

## FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS

Early in the session, legislators approved 4 percent allowable growth for schools for the 2008-09 school year. Governor Culver signed the bill into law which increases the cost per pupil by \$213 to \$5,546. Iowa PTA continues to support 6 percent allowable growth and believes the current level falls short of providing adequate funding for our schools.

Quality preschool was one of Governor Culver's priorities. The bill, awaiting his signature, would provide some funding for four-year-old preschool with plans to increase funding over the next several years. The Department of Education is establishing a process to determine which districts will qualify for preschool funding.

There was some funding allocated to address Iowa's property tax structure that results in student inequity. "Property poor" districts are still struggling to provide funding for education that is equal to that of the "property rich" districts. This will continue to be addressed in future sessions of the legislature.

The statewide penny for school infrastructure died in the closing hours of the session.

Other funding for education included \$70 million for increased teacher pay in fiscal year 2008 and another \$75 million in fiscal year 2009.

## CONTACTING LAWMAKERS

### WRITING TO YOUR LEGISLATORS

During the legislative session, address mail to Iowa Legislators at:

The Honorable (full name of legislator)  
Iowa House of Representatives (or Iowa Senate)  
State Capitol  
Des Moines, IA 50319

Use the correct salutation:

Dear Representative (last name),  
Or  
Dear Senator (last name),

### CALLING YOUR LEGISLATORS

Leave a message for your Representative in the House by calling (515) 281-3221

Leave a message for your Senator by calling (515) 281-3371

### E-MAILING YOUR LEGISLATORS

You MUST include your home address in your email, so they know you are a constituent!

Email addresses are created as follows:

*firstname.lastname@legis.state.ia.us*

### DON'T KNOW WHO YOUR LEGISLATORS ARE?

Go to: <http://www.legis.state.ia.us/FindLeg/>

### TIPS ON COMMUNICATING WITH LAWMAKERS:

[http://www.iowapta.org/pdf/legislative/Advocating\\_to\\_Lawmakers.pdf](http://www.iowapta.org/pdf/legislative/Advocating_to_Lawmakers.pdf)

### ADVOCACY GUIDELINES FOR PTAs:

[http://www.iowapta.org/pdf/legislative/Guidelines\\_for\\_Advocating.pdf](http://www.iowapta.org/pdf/legislative/Guidelines_for_Advocating.pdf)

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To get a FREE advocacy workshop for your PTA, contact the Iowa PTA office:

[ia\\_office@pta.org](mailto:ia_office@pta.org)  
(515) 225-4197  
(800) 475-4782

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#### **National PTA Legislative Information –**

- To receive National PTA's weekly e-newsletter, "This Week in Washington", go to: [http://www.pta.org/issues\\_and\\_action.html](http://www.pta.org/issues_and_action.html)
- To view previous issues of the weekly e-newsletter, go to: [http://www.pta.org/ia\\_newsletters.html](http://www.pta.org/ia_newsletters.html)

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#### **Iowa PTA Legislative Information –**

- To subscribe to Iowa PTA "Legislative News", go to: [www.iowapta.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=legislative.network](http://www.iowapta.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=legislative.network)
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