The Department of Education announced this week the availability of 50 student scholarships to cover the cost of registering for the Iowa Financial Literacy Summit on May 5th at Hy-Vee Hall in Des Moines. The scholarships, worth $50 each, are available on a first-come, first-served basis to K-12 students enrolled in any public or nonpublic school. There is a requirement for all students under the age of 18 to be accompanied by an adult with paid registration.

The summit will be hosted by Gov. Terry E. Branstad, Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds, and the Iowa Department of Education. The summit is open to all Iowans, including middle and high school students, parents, and educators. Student-focused sessions at the summit will focus on debt decision-making, money management in college, entrepreneurship and other issues.

The purpose of the summit is to help Iowans understand the important role of financial literacy in education from both a state and national perspective, to raise public awareness of community resources and programs, and to provide resources for teaching financial literacy.

Iowa students can request a scholarship by contacting Stefanie Wager at stefanie.wager@iowa.gov.

All other summit tickets remain available through April 21 at: https://www.educateiowa.gov/event/iowa-financial-literacy-summit.

The summit’s keynote speaker is Jack Kosakowski, chief executive officer of Junior Achievement, an organization dedicated to educating students about workforce readiness, entrepreneurship and financial literacy. A complete agenda is available on the Iowa Department of Education’s website: https://www.educateiowa.gov/event/iowa-financial-literacy-summit

The summit is part of a broader effort to bolster financial literacy awareness and support. That effort started in January 2014, when a work team convened in response to growing concerns about whether Iowa students are learning the financial literacy skills they need to succeed.

The work team, made up of Iowans representing K-12 education, financial services, higher education and the Iowa Department of Education, recommended a review of state financial literacy requirements for K-12 schools as well as a study of how school districts approach financial literacy education. The group also recommended more centralized resources for teachers and tapping financial literacy experts to provide professional development training.

As a small business owner, I have experienced the lack of knowledge in this area from those entering the workforce. In 2013, I co-sponsored legislation dealing with financial literacy as a graduation requirement in public schools. I am much in favor of this type of training for our youth and am pleased that the Iowa Department of Education has sponsored scholarships to this event.
While SSA has been unable to reach a satisfactory compromise, the House has passed a number of bills aimed at addressing additional needs of Iowa’s schools, students and parents. Below is a list of some of them.

**FLEXIBILITY FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS:**
With such a tight budget year, the House responded with several creative bills to provide some relief to school districts regarding some of their existing funds. Fortunately, House File 384, which provides flexibility for districts with PPEL funds, is still alive and making its way through committee!

However, the following bills were not taken up by the Senate:

**HF 156 – PRESCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS**
Allows school districts to keep up to 10% of the preschool funding for administrative costs, passing the remainder on to the school districts. Defines what does and doesn’t constitute administrative costs giving schools better options to address actual costs of the program. *Passed the House 99-0 on February 17.*

**HF 228 – TRANSITIONAL COACHING AUTHORIZATION**
Addresses occasional coaching shortages in some districts by creating a Transitional Coaching Authorization that allows a district to hire a non-teacher coach for a sports team, provided the coach is at least 21 and completes the required coursework in the first year. The license is valid only for one year, may not be renewed, and is only good for the hiring district. *Passed the House 81-18 on March 10.*

**HF 346 – DROPOUT AND AT-RISK FUNDING USES**
The bill allows cross-programming by allowing the funding used for either Dropout and Dropout Prevention or for At-Risk to be used for the other purposes giving districts more options to address the actual needs of their district. *Passed the House 97-0 on March 19.*

**HF 204 – ONLINE SCHOOLS SUNSET DATE REMOVAL**
This bill removes the sunset date of Iowa’s two full-time online schools, allowing the schools to continue operating as they currently do. The bill also allows an exception for the open enrollment cap in the case of siblings being prevented from attending together and in cases where the resident district feels the student’s needs would be best served in a full-time, online setting and adds some additional accountability requirements for the schools. *Passed the House 58-40 on February 17.*

**HF 283 – ALL IOWA OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIP**
Requires that the award be spread out over 2 years for students attending 4-year institutions, instead of providing the entire award the first year. Many students in need of such financial assistance see their ability to obtain scholarships for their second year diminish. *Passed the House 97-0 on March 19.*

**HF 284 – IOWA TUITION GRANT CAP**
Removes the $5000 statutory maximum award cap for students receiving Iowa Tuition Grants, which was put in place decades ago and has not kept up with rising costs of college. The award is already capped at the tuition amount Regents students pay and by whatever amount the legislature appropriates, making this remaining cap unnecessary. *Passed the House 97-0 on March 19.*
Art Grants Available

Art Project Grant – Deadline is May 1, 2015
The Iowa Arts Council’s Art Project Grant Program offers grants from $1,000 to $10,000 to individual artists, non-profit organizations, schools, tribal councils and local, county, state and federal government agencies. It has been designed to create opportunities for the arts to flourish in Iowa. The program invests in projects that positively impact vitality of the arts in the state, demonstrate public value and support IAC’s funding priorities, which include collaboration & partnership, excellence & innovation, and impact & accessibility. Visit http://www.iowaartscouncil.org/grants/guidelines/ArtProjectGrantGuidelinesFY16.pdf to learn more about the specific requirements.

Artist Fellowship Program – Deadline is May 1, 2015
IAC’s Artist Fellowship Program was created in 2014 to recognize the impact individual artists have on the vitality of the arts in Iowa. The program supports artists who demonstrate excellence and innovation in the arts; public value through actively and creating and presenting their work; and career readiness. IAC Fellows will receive $5,000, professional development, networking and promotional resources over the course of the fellowship period. The website to gather more information on this program: http://www.iowaartscouncil.org/grants/guidelines/ArtistFellowshipProgramGuidelinesFY16.pdf

Big Yellow School Bus Grant — Application Opens May 1, 2015
The Iowa Arts Council will begin accepting applications for its fiscal year 2016 Big Yellow School Bus Grant Program on May 1, 2015. The BYSB Program provides $500 to Iowa schools and pre-schools to underwrite the cost of transportation for field trips to attend an arts event or to underwrite the cost of artist fees to bring a professional artist or artist group into the classroom or school to lead an in-depth arts learning experience or artistic performance. To learn more, visit http://www.iowaartscouncil.org/funding/bysbgrants.shtml

The Iowa Arts Council is a division of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, www.culturalaffairs.org For more information about any of these IAC grant programs, visit www.iowaartscouncil.org or contact Veronica O’Hern at veronica.ohern@iowa.gov or 515-281-3293.

Grants Available to Promote Specialty Crops

On Tuesday, Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey issued a press release that IDALS is accepting applications for grant funding through the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. The grants are available to support projects that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops grown in Iowa. The final funding level for the program this year has not yet been finalized by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, which administers the program, but Iowa received $307,610 in funding in 2014 and it is anticipated the state will receive a similar level in 2015.

Grant funds shall be used for projects that solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops that benefit the specialty crop industry as a whole. Iowa agencies, universities, institutions, and producer, industry, and community-based organizations are all eligible to apply for funding to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Grant awards will be considered up to a maximum of $24,000 and projects can have a duration of up to 30 months (2 ½ years). “Specialty Crops” that are eligible under this program are fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits and horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture. Both fresh and processed specialty crops are eligible.

Proposals must be received by IDALS on or before 4:00 p.m. on Friday, May 1, 2015. For more information, visit http://www.agriculture.state.ia.us/Horticulture_and_FarmersMarkets/specialtyCropGrant.asp
Tips for Managing Cover Crops This Spring

Last week, Ag Secretary Northey commented on tips to manage cover crops in springtime. As the number of Iowa farmers using cover crops continues to grow, it’s important to help make sure these farmers have a successful experience. This information was put together with the help of the Iowa cover crop working group, which includes representatives from IDALS, Practical Farmers of Iowa, Iowa State University, Iowa Learning Farms, and USDA Agriculture Research Service. More information about incorporating cover crops into your farming operation can be found at http://www.cleanwateriowa.org/farm-practices.aspx or at http://www.extension.iastate.edu/ilf/. In general farmers using cover crop practices should consider the following--

- **Evaluate for winter kill** – If the above ground cover crop is brown and near the soil surface no green plant material is present then your cover crop winter-killed. Cover crops such as tillage radishes and oats typically winter kill and then no additional spring management is needed. Other cover crops, such as winter or cereal rye, winter wheat, triticale, and barley, consistently over-winters in Iowa. In late March, double check plant stems near soil surface to see if the plant has survived.

- **Termination options** – Herbicides, tillage or a combination of the two can be used to effectively manage cover crops in the spring. Keep in mind any tillage will reduce the effectiveness of the cover crop residue to protect against erosion and suppress weeds. Some additional considerations for both methods of termination follow:
  - Herbicide: For successful herbicide termination, make sure the plant has "greened-up" and has enough living surface area for the herbicide to work. Experienced farmers suggest spraying during the middle of the day and, if possible, spray when air temperature is at least 45 or 50F. Unless you have experience, separate the nitrogen application from a "burndown" herbicide application.
  - Tillage: Terminating cover crops with tillage can be effective, but may take more than one tillage pass. Wet periods can delay tillage to terminate cover crops and wet conditions following tillage can allow cover crop plants to survive tillage operations. Also, tilling eliminates the erosion prevention benefit that the cover crop would usually provide in the early part of the growing season.

- **Consider nitrogen needs** – Cover crops effectively sequester nitrogen and as the plant residue breaks down it will release its nutrients, making them available for the crop later in the season when they need them the most. However, there is the potential for lower available nitrogen early in the growing season, especially following an overwintering grass cover crop like cereal rye. To protect yield, farmers growing corn after a cereal rye cover crop may want to apply 30-50 lbs. of nitrogen at or near corn planting. This is not additional nitrogen, but within the farmer’s total fertilizer program.

- **Know crop insurance requirements** – Crop insurance rules state that a cover crop in Zone 3 (western third of Iowa) must be terminated by the day of cash crop planting. A cover crop in Zone 4 (eastern 2/3rds of Iowa) must be terminated within 5 days of cash crop planting. If using no-till add 7 days to either scenario. Visit http://www.rma.usda.gov/help/faq/covercrops2014.html for more information about these requirements.

- **Start planning now for cover crop needs this fall** – Determine what cover crop works with your crop protection program. Some residual herbicides have carryover restrictions for certain species of cover crops. Consult with an agronomist, cover crop representative or visit www.weeds.iastate.edu/mgmt/2015/CCherbicides.pdf.

More than 1,600 farmers have volunteered to invest $4.2 million to try a new practice on their farm to better protect water quality over the past two years through the Iowa Water Quality Initiative. Thousands of other Iowa farmers are using cost share through other state and federal programs or growing cover crops on their own with no assistance. Iowa also currently has 16 Water Quality Initiative demonstration projects in targeted watersheds that are focused on helping farmers implement and demonstrate water quality practices. The state has provided $7.4 million in funding to support these projects and has leveraged an additional $11.7 million in additional funding from partners and landowners.
The Definition for “abandoned well” states that any water supply well that is no longer in use, or is in such poor physical condition that it cannot be repaired or safely used” is classified as abandoned. The risk is dependent on a number of variables. At a minimum, these variables include the location of the well, the well depth and diameter, and maintenance done to the well head and surrounding area.

Russell, Tell, Environmental Specialist with the Iowa DNR, discussed the need to identify and close abandoned wells. “Unneeded and abandoned wells that are not plugged should be considered a liability to property owners. Properly plugging wells helps eliminate the direct pathway that can allow surface and shallow groundwater quick access to our aquifers. It also eliminates the personal safety concerns created by the well,” stated Tell. When the head, walls, or casings of wells are in poor condition, surface water can flow over the top or through leaky casings and enter the aquifer. This increases the risk of contamination to the state’s groundwater supply. In addition, every year people, pets, and livestock are injured or killed by having some interaction with a well in poor repair or one that is left unprotected or abandoned.

A well owner has other options, if plugging the well is not desired. Check out http://www.iowadnr.gov/InsideDNR/RegulatoryWater/PrivateWellProgram/WellPlugging.aspx for more information.

BREAKING NEWS: Iowa Supreme Court Rules on Eminent Domain Use

For those of us who have been passionate in our advocacy of protecting the private property rights of Iowans (in the wake of the egregious 2005 U.S. Supreme Court’s Kelo Decision) yesterday was cause for celebration.

In a 6-1 decision, the Iowa Supreme Court ruled in favor of Clarke County landowners whose property was being threatened with condemnation by the Clarke County Reservoir Commission (CCRC) using eminent domain to acquire land to build a public reservoir for drinking water needs. The problem was that the CCRC was moving forward with condemnation that went exceedingly beyond the scope of drinking water. Specifically, the CCRC was attempting to create a “regional recreational facility” [Section II(a) of the CCRC’s 28E agreement] and was poised to condemn enough land that was many times more what was needed for the purpose of drinking water.

Back in 2013, I co-sponsored bipartisan legislation (HF 219, GA 85) that was designed to directly confront this issue. The bill passed by a vote of 93-6. Unfortunately, the Senate leadership at that time chose not to take up the issue, despite the insistence and numerous attempts from the House.

During the current General Assembly, the House has once again crafted several pieces of legislation -- in a bipartisan manner -- designed to curb the abuses of eminent domain in Iowa.

With yesterday’s historic victory in the fight to protect Iowans’ private property rights, my optimism has been invigorated. I heartily applaud the Iowa Supreme Court in this decision and my hope is renewed that the Iowa Senate will recognize the need to be proactive in addressing this issue with the legislation that has recently been proposed by the House.
I had the privilege to floor manage Senate File 267 this week, which establishes privileged communications between emergency service personnel and their peer support group counselors. Several weeks ago, Senator Kinney floor managed this bill in the Senate. He gave a very moving personal story about one of his own traumatic experiences in law enforcement -- dealing with the homicide of a little girl that was not much different in age from his own daughter at that time -- and how the support of a critical incident debrief counselor helped him through a “horrific incident”.

A couple of weeks ago, I received an email from Jeremy Sprague who shared with me a similar story that I share now. “Ten years ago I worked as a deputy sheriff in a smaller community and was involved in a shooting that changed my life forever. After the shooting I was left with little support from my agency, friends, and family. This was not their fault since they had never experienced this type of traumatic situation before. There was a lack of training and understanding. I vowed to change this for other law enforcement officers and emergency service workers who are involved in traumatic events.”

Mr. Sprague used that experience to create a Peer Support Team, which was the first program of its kind in Iowa. This support group -- modeled after many other peer support groups across the country -- is designed to help emergency service personnel cope with difficult times during moments of personal and professional crisis.

However, Mr. Sprague went on to explain that there is one glaring exception in the effectiveness of these peer support groups -- and that is the lack of protection when it comes to the confidentiality of conversations between emergency service professionals and their peer support group counselors.

Senate File 267 provides that a peer support group counselor who obtains information from an emergency service professional, shall not be compelled to disclose any details of a privileged conversation -- when providing testimony in a court of law or otherwise.

We owe a debt of gratitude to our men and women in law enforcement, fire fighting, emergency medical services, and emergency management coordination. All who work hard day in and day out to keep our communities safe. They are the unsung heroes of our local communities and they deserve this professional courtesy and protection afforded by this legislation. It was an honor to shepherd this bill through the final stage of the legislative process and I look forward to Governor Branstad signing this bill into law.
From Inside the Chamber

This week we held floor debate on several bills that the Senate sent over to us, or some of us used our time to amend the Senate bills to make them a better fit for Iowans before debate was held on them. Iowa’s National Legislators have a standing invitation to stop by when they are passing through Des Moines. This week, Congressman Rod Blum stopped by the Capitol to visit with us. Congressman Blum serves the 1st District of Iowa. Thursday was Home School Day at the Capitol, and I had several constituents drop by to visit. Pictured below is the Klein Family from Reasnor. We were also honored to have President George Washington (as portrayed by Brian Bopp) drop by for a visit, as well. 😊

Getting Around the District...

My town hall schedule for Friday, April 17:
I will be at D & S in Melcher from 6:30 - 7:30 am and Two Rivers Coop in Otley from 10 – 11 am.

If you are unable to attend a forum, please contact me at 641-218-0185 or greg.heartsill@legis.iowa.gov.

If you have a group that is coming to the Capitol, please let me know so that I am able to arrange some time to visit with you and arrange a tour. If you would like to watch us online in the House Chamber:
http://coolice.legis.state.ia.us/Cool-ICE/default.asp?category=billinfo&Service=livevideo

Please share this newsletter with those that might be interested and/or send me email addresses of those that wish to be added to my newsletter list. It is a great honor to represent you in Iowa House District 28. God Bless!