



Democrats see green rather than red on gas tax hike

By [O.Kay Henderson](#)

A key Democrat in the legislature says he's not giving up on a hike in the state gas tax. Senate President Jack Kibbie, a Democrat from Emmetsburg, jokes that he's in a war against potholes. "Yes, I am," Kibbie told reporters, "with others."

But Governor Culver, a Democrat, said yesterday during a statehouse news conference that he was opposed to raising the gas tax. "I don't know how much more clear I could be. I do not think raising the gas tax during a recession is a prudent thing to do during a recession. Period," Culver said. "However, if 150 legislators want to keep talking about it, they have that right."

Kibbie isn't deterred by that. "He hasn't said, 'No,' in my presence," Kibbie says.

House Democratic Leader Kevin McCarthy of Des Moines suggests legislators have heard what Culver's been saying, but they've never heard Culver give them an unequivocal "no" on a gas tax hike. "What I heard him say -- I'm going to try to see if I can get it -- 'I don't know how much clearer I could be that now is not the time to be looking at these sort of taxes, however if 150 legislators want to have that discussion, they can certainly have that discussion' -- that's kind of what I think he said," McCarthy says, quoting the governor, "which means he's expressed his opinion, but there seems to me there's still a willingness to listen to the legislature on this issue."

House Speaker Pat Murphy, a Democrat from Dubuque, says it will be March or April rather than February when legislators tackle the issue in debate.