

# THE Messenger

## NEWS

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### Local legislators reflect on session

#### Say business incentives, highway bill are key for area

By BILL SHEA, Messenger staff writer

New business incentives for the Webster City area and a measure that may eventually yield money to widen U.S. Highway 20 are two benefits the region won from the 2007 legislative session, local lawmakers say.

Those items are in addition to what state Rep. Helen Miller, D-Fort Dodge, called the “hugest thing for this area” — \$250,000 to establish a biofuels testing lab at Iowa Central Community College.

While Miller and her Democratic colleagues seem generally pleased with the legislature’s work, state Rep. David Tjepkes, R-Gowrie, is voicing his concerns about the state’s \$6 billion budget.

“The state, quite frankly, is spending too much money,” he said.

He said the spending trend will prompt severe across-the-board budget cuts or tax increases in the future. He added that he hopes Gov. Chet Culver will use his line item veto to trim the budget.

But he said he’s pleased that the legislature passed a plan commonly called TIME-21 which creates a framework for raising more money for highways.

### Webster City economics

A bill authored by state Rep. McKinley Bailey, D-Webster City, would help that town cope with the expected layoffs of 700 Electrolux workers.

The bill designates everything within a three-mile radius of the Electrolux plant as an enterprise zone. It provides income tax credits and job training credits for new or expanding businesses that create at least 10 new jobs there. Those benefits will also be available to businesses that invest at least \$500,000 in buildings or equipment in the zone. It provides property tax relief for construction of new homes there.

Bailey described the measure as a “significant incentive.”

The Senate passed the bill in the closing days of the session and sent it to Culver. Bailey said the governor, who prodded senators to pass it, is expected to sign it into law.

## Highways

Lawmakers created a policy framework to raise more money for highway construction. While doing that, they called for an eight-member panel of representatives and senators to suggest some specific ways of generating more money for roads. That panel will submit a report before next year's legislative session.

Tjepkes, the ranking Republican on the House Transportation Committee, worked on the issue throughout the session. He described the bill that passed as a "very positive step forward." He added that he anticipates being appointed to the eight-member panel.

The bill would split the new money between the state, counties and cities. The state would get 60 percent and the counties and cities would each get 20 percent.

It requires that Access Iowa Highways, highways on the state's Commercial-Industrial Network and those that serve ethanol plants get priority for the state's share of the new money. U.S. Highway 20 meets all of those descriptions.

"This thing has Highway 20 all over it," said state Sen. Daryl Beall, D-Fort Dodge.

The bill was introduced in response to a funding squeeze that will leave Iowa with no money for new highways after 2015.

The measure is called TIME-21, which stands for Transportation Investment Moves the Economy in the 21st Century.

## Other bills

Bailey authored a bill that makes it easier for grandparents who have been separated from their grandchildren to get the ability to visit them. Culver is expected to sign it.

A proposal from Miller that would have created an online arts curriculum died in a legislative committee. She said she'll try to get it passed next year.

A bill authored by Tjepkes that makes it easier for veterans groups and volunteer fire departments to get a one-day permit to conduct games of chance as a fund raiser was signed by Culver.

Senate President Jack Kibbie, D-Emmetsburg, unsuccessfully tried to move a bill that would require meat packers doing business in Iowa to buy at least 25 percent of their hogs on the open market.

Bailey and Beall teamed up to write a bill overhauling the state's Department of Veterans Affairs. Beall also sponsored a bill that enables relatives of troops killed in action to get a special license plate.

Contact Bill Shea at (515) 573-2141 or [bshea@messengernews.net](mailto:bshea@messengernews.net)  
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713 Central Ave.  
Fort Dodge, IA 50501  
**515-573-2141**

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