



Credit Unions:
Improving the Financial
Lives of Iowans



SHARE

SUBSCRIBER SERVICES

» [Login](#)

SITE RESOURCES

» [IowaPolitics_PDA_Site](#)
» [Twitter](#)
» [Facebook](#)

FEATURES

» [2010 Campaign Fundraising](#)
» [Commentary](#)
» [Press Releases](#)

CAUCUS COVERAGE

» [2008 Coverage](#)
» [2012 Countdown](#)

BLOGS

» [Election Blog](#)

RSS FEEDS

» [Election Blog feed](#)
» [Headlines](#)
» [Press Releases](#)

LINKS

» [Iowa Government](#)
» [Media Links](#)

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

» [Advertise](#)
» [Subscribe](#)
» [HOME](#)

Submit comments, news tips, press releases and video links to staff@iowapolitics.com



IowaPolitics.com: Iowa Senate leader calls on Legislature to increase gas tax
12/8/2011

By Lynn Campbell | IowaPolitics.com

DES MOINES — Iowa Senate President Jack Kibbie wants the Legislature to increase the state's gas tax to pay for crumbling roads and bridges, despite Gov. Terry Branstad's opposition.

"Everybody's got their own county road they drive on because the state roads are so bad," Kibbie, D-Emmetsburg, said Wednesday. "I suppose we're going to have to wait until a school bus falls through a bridge. Close to 30 percent of the bridges are not safe to drive across."

Kibbie, whose Democratic caucus holds a 26-24 majority in the Iowa Senate, spoke at a luncheon hosted by the [Greater Des Moines Partnership](#), the economic development group for the Des Moines metro area.

He said Branstad made "a mistake" when he took the issue off the table for 2012, and urged fellow legislative leaders to send the governor a bill that increases the gas tax.

"I don't believe that the legislative branch ... ought to wait," Kibbie said. "We don't have to spend a lot of time on it. It's been studied now for 20 years."

But Iowa House Speaker [Kraig Paulsen](#), R-Hiawatha, said Iowa lawmakers will not increase the gas tax in 2012.

"I don't anticipate that right now," Paulsen told reporters.

Iowa has an estimated \$1.6 billion annual shortfall for transportation infrastructure needs, which includes \$215 million a year that's considered "critical," according to the Iowa Department of Transportation, or DOT.

The governor's [Transportation 2020 Citizen Advisory Commission](#), an 18-member panel assigned by Branstad to assist the state in reviewing the needs and funding for Iowa's roads and bridges, last month proposed increasing Iowa's gas tax by 8- to 10-cents a gallon.

The increase would generate between \$184 million to \$230 million in additional state revenue each year. Iowa charges a 21-cents per gallon tax on gasoline, 22.5 cents on diesel and 19 cents on ethanol-blended gasoline.

"With the ethanol plants and the biodiesel plants and the livestock industry in rural Iowa, (those) roads are important," Kibbie said. "We're not going to have commerce like we need it without a good road system."

But Branstad said last month that Iowa must first look for cost savings and efficiencies in government before it considers increasing the gas tax to pay for the state's deteriorating roads and bridges.

Branstad wants the state to find administrative savings of about \$50 million, or the equivalent of 2 cents of the gas tax. The governor said he'd also like to examine the 1 cent of tax per gallon that's being diverted from the state's [Road Use Tax Fund](#) — the main source of funding for Iowa's highways — to instead clean up leaky underground storage tanks.

Iowa House Minority Leader [Kevin McCarthy](#), D-Des Moines, questioned whether the state can find \$50 million in efficiencies.

"That's easier said than done," McCarthy said. "I know one of those components, \$12 million of that, is to take the so-called 'blue shirts' that monitor DOT stations and move them to the Department of Public Safety ... Merging two law enforcement agencies is easier said than done."

McCarthy said Iowa drivers are paying more than their share for Iowa's roads, through vehicle registration and licensing. He said a gas-tax increase could ensure that out-of-state drivers pay their share.

But Paulsen, whose Republican caucus holds a 60-40 majority in the Iowa House, endorsed Branstad's call for finding efficiencies.

"I think his approach, going through and making sure that every penny that hardworking Iowans sent us is used efficiently and effectively, I think is the right thing to do," Paulsen said. "That sounds like what we're going to do this year."

Economic development groups are among those backing an increase in the state's gas tax, but wants to change the Road Use Tax Fund formula, so more money is given to Iowa's most traveled roads. The Greater Des Moines Partnership unveiled its 2012 legislative priorities on Wednesday.

When asked about the Partnership's advocacy for the proposal, Paulsen said: "We listen to all our constituents, but that doesn't change my answer."

Branstad, a Republican, is the second governor to take the issue off the table. Former Democratic Gov. Chet Culver also threatened to veto any bill increasing the gas tax.

Listen to Wednesday's the legislative forum:

http://www.iowapolitics.com/1009/Partnership_Legislative_Forum.mp3

Listen to interview with Kraig Paulsen:

http://www.iowapolitics.com/1009/111207Paulsen_interview.mp3

See previous IowaPolitics.com coverage on this topic:

<http://www.iowapolitics.com/index.iml?Article=252623>

<http://www.iowapolitics.com/index.iml?Article=251654>

Listen to November interview with Branstad on the gas tax:

http://www.iowapolitics.com/1009/111108Branstad_interview.mp3



Printer-friendly version



Send this article to a friend



You like this. · Admin Page · Insights · **Error**
Confirm Rick Murray likes this. Be the first of your friends to like