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IACCB & INHF Legislative Report - February 22, 2014

1 message

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The Capitol Report

February 22, 2014

This legislative report for the Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards and the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation comes out every two weeks during the legislative session, but you don't have to wait for two weeks to check on the status of bills of interest. The IACCB and INHF Bill Trackers are updated daily - bookmark the following links to keep up with daily action on bills of interest:

- [Click here for the IACCB Bill Tracker.](#)
- [Click here for the INHF Bill Tracker.](#)

Deadline week at the Capitol ended prematurely this week when reports of the "snow storm of the year" came out. The House rushed through committee work on Wednesday in order to send their people home before the storm hit on Thursday afternoon. The Senate followed suit with all but three committees, which decided to defy nature and finish up their work without forcing quick debate.

Bad things sometimes happen in the rush to get through the funnel. Bills and amendments are written in haste, and votes taken with promises that the legislation is "a work in progress." That means imperfect bills emerge from committees, whose main jobs are really to perfect the bills before they hit the floor. As you look through bills of interest, you might find some things that need to be changed with the surviving bills.

So as you look ahead at the next couple of weeks, legislators will be spending most of their time in floor debate, moving bills off their calendars and over to the other chamber for ongoing committee work. Amendments will be offered to perfect those imperfect bills, and get them fixed before moving on to the other chamber for ongoing discussion.

The next funnel deadline will be in just three short weeks - about 11 working days. Bills that want to continue their path to becoming law need to have passed the House or Senate, and be out of the other chamber's committee by Friday, March 14. After that date, only the Appropriations and Ways and Means Committees will continue to meet regularly, as bills coming out of those committees are considered funnel-proof.

Budget subcommittees are also wrapping up their work in the next week

or two, with most discussions going on behind the scenes. The rumors of joint targets may be greatly exaggerated. Republicans controlling the House are concerned about the State Auditor's report that the Governor's proposed budget overspends by \$144 million. Democrats that control the Senate say the state is sitting on nearly \$1 billion in reserves and should use some of that to pay for much-needed infrastructure and other one-time investments.

So while leaders continue to work on a joint target, it may be mid-March when new revenue estimates are released before the two sides come together on a final budget number. In the meantime, budget subcommittee chairs are getting their budgets ready, making language changes, and setting priorities for funding. So now is the time to put the pressure on for your funding priorities.

While this year is largely just a "budget year," due to the passage of so many broad policy initiatives last session, there are a few policy questions the Legislature is attempting to address this session. Among those policy issues would be the future of the Iowa Juvenile Home / State Training School for Girls, making texting while driving a primary offense (meaning you can be pulled over for doing it) and anti-bullying legislation. There are also a number of bills dealing with guns, abortion, minimum wage and other hot-button issues, most of which will probably pass one chamber of the Legislature but die in the other chamber.

Weigh In With Your Priorities

With the first funnel behind us, we know that budget discussions will now start to move forward. This is the appropriate time for YOU to start reaching out to legislators to let them know your priorities, whether they be more recreational trail funding, more funding for REAP, or whatever priority is important to YOU. Decisions will begin to take shape in the days ahead.

Don't like calling or emailing your legislators? Check out the Legislative Forum link at the bottom of this and every Capitol Report. You'll see a link that says "Find Legislative Forums Near You." A lot of time is spent trying to keep that list updated with the very latest opportunities for you to interact with your legislator **IN PERSON**. It's for your use, so take advantage of it!



Emerald Ash Borer

[Senate File 2159](#), a bill focused on woodland health, survived the funnel by passing out of the Senate Natural Resources Committee. It was renumbered as SF 2248, and was amended in committee to set up an interim committee focused on the Emerald Ash Borer.

Snowmobiles

This week's crazy weather forced legislative committees to severely curtail the number of bills they would be bringing through the funnel to keep alive. For the Senate Natural Resources Committee, a Thursday committee meeting was moved into Wednesday, and a decision was made to take action only on [SSB 3179](#), legislation making several changes to snowmobile regulations. This was good news for the Iowa Snowmobile Association, who supports SSB 3179.

Your Legislative Team

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Legislative Resource Links

IACCB Website

[IACCB Bill Tracker](#)

INHF Website

[INHF Bill Tracker](#)

Iowa Legislative Website

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