

# infonet

A publication of ID Action in partnership with Iowa's DD Council

## VOTER ID DISCUSSION CONTINUES IN 2012

Secretary of State Matt Schultz is taking another run at requiring Iowa voters to show a photo ID at the polls. But some say a new cutting-edge election system may be a strong and secure alternative that maintains voter rights.

PAGE 2



## Subcommittee Work Continues

An October New York Times/CBS News poll showed that 89% of Americans did not trust "government" to do the right thing. But the "right thing" is exactly what Iowa's legislators did a few years ago when they opened up the subcommittee process and gave Iowans an opportunity to weigh in on the issues they really care about.

Every bill must now go through the following committee process on its way to becoming a law. This process must be completed by Friday, February 24 this year (or the bill will be "dead"):

1. Bill introduced and sent to a committee.
2. Committee chair assigns a three-person subcommittee.
3. Subcommittee meets and hears comments from public.
4. Subcommittee members don't vote – they "sign" a subcommittee report if they want to move it forward (or they don't sign it if they don't like it). Two signatures are needed to move the bill forward.
5. Committee votes on bill.

This time of the year, you can expect 20-30 subcommittee meetings each day, where legislators and the public meet to talk and work out areas of disagreement.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 3**

## IN THIS ISSUE

- PAGE 1** Subcommittee Work Continues
- PAGE 2** Voter Photo ID Discussion Continues
- PAGE 2** Preserving Voter Rights with Precinct Atlas
- PAGE 3** Other Capitol News
- PAGE 5** New Bills This Week
- PAGE 7** Legislative Forums
- PAGE 8** Capitol Event Calendar

"Do not wait to strike until the iron is hot; make it hot by striking."

William Sprague



## Voter Photo ID Discussion Continues in 2012

This year, the Iowa House of Representatives passed a bill requiring Iowa voters to show a state-issued photo ID in order to vote ([HF 95](#)). The bill is still technically alive, but the Senate State Government Committee say they have no plans to take it up.

Secretary of State Matt Schultz, who campaigned on the Voter ID issue, recently announced plans to take another run at the issue. His bill ([HSB 582](#)) requires voters to show a photo ID at the polls, provides free state photo IDs and allows students to show a school ID, older Iowans to sign an affidavit affirming their identity, and a person with an ID to vouch for someone without one.

Critics of the bill say that Iowa's voting system is secure and there have been no instances of voter fraud, making the need for a Voter ID bill unnecessary. "Unless there's a problem, there's really no point and certainly no justification for making it harder to vote," said ACLU Executive Director Ben Stone.

"We're not trying to disenfranchise people or keep people from voting," Secretary Schultz replied. "The real point of this law is to make sure you are who you say you are when you come to vote." Schultz went on to say that he didn't know how common voter fraud was in Iowa but said it was important to close potential loopholes.

Legislators will need to appropriate money to cover the costs of issuing free IDs if HSB 582 passes. Last year, the state estimated the cost to be \$173,000 in the first year, and a \$345,000 each year after.

HSB 582 is in the House State Government Committee, assigned to a subcommittee of Rep. Renee Schulte, Rep. Mary Gaskill & Rep. Ron Jorgenson.

## Preserving Voter Rights with Precinct Atlas

One of the most important jobs of a county auditor is to run the elections in the county. They work hard to protect voter rights and make sure all election laws are followed. Because these laws are complex, training the thousands of people that work at the polls on Election Day is a very big part of a county auditor's job. And it is not a simple job.

To protect voter rights, poll workers must be well versed on election law, and the laws can change. Over half of Iowa's 99 counties (51 of them) have joined forces to make their county auditor's job easier by using an innovative and award-winning program called "Precinct Atlas."

Precinct Atlas is a precinct election tool developed by Cerro Gordo County (home of Mason City) to guide precinct workers through the correct process to check-in and confirm each voter. This computer program makes sure every voter is treated equally, and all laws are followed. Precinct Atlas:

- **Protects each voter's right to vote.** Election laws are applied correctly and consistently, and the need for provisional ballots is greatly reduced. The system is user-friendly and it produces a complete paper record to maintain security.
- **Protects Iowa's election system.** The system makes sure each voter is voting in the right precinct, and eliminates problems with provisional ballots because the system makes sure they are correctly and efficiently completed.
- **Quickly processes voters who register to vote on Election Day.** The system records the voter's registration information, completes the required

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 3**

## Precinct Atlas *(continued from page 2)*

voter registration and oath forms for you; checks the voter's name against a statewide list of convicted felons (because felons cannot vote unless they've had their voting rights restored); and offers the option for a voter to use his/her Iowa driver's license for an easier and more efficient check-in procedure.

Precinct Atlas has won several awards - 2010 Stars & Stripes Award from The Election Center, 2010 Excellence in Action Award from the Iowa State Association of Counties, and the 2011 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties. But the best "award" is the feedback from the people that use it:

*"The experience was completely positive. The poll workers loved it. One even threatened us if we took it away from them. There were voter comments on how the process was faster."*

Denise Fraise, Lee County Deputy Auditor

*"The response from the precinct election officials was phenomenal! Precinct chairs reported the on-screen instructions were easy to follow, and workers became very efficient as they verified voter information and provided voters with ballots. No provisional ballots were unnecessarily issued, because clear instructions are provided for special situations. Efficiency and accuracy were the words of the day!"*

State Senator (and former Montgomery County Auditor) Joni Ernst

Legislators are considering a request for \$2-3 million state appropriation to create a revolving loan fund to help counties purchase the equipment necessary to participate (computer, bar code scanner, label printer, and network cables). Counties would pay back the state funds over several years. It is estimated that the cost per precinct is around

\$1500-\$3000 for the equipment (depending on how many computers you need to handle voter traffic). Many legislators believe that this system makes Voter ID laws unnecessary, and addresses the real problems with the election system by making sure all laws are followed in every precinct of the state, and making sure all Iowans have the ability to cast their votes safely and securely on Election Day.

For more information about (and pictures of) Precinct Atlas, go to <http://bit.ly/x1jhXq>.

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## Subcommittees *(continued from page 1)*

This subcommittee work will continue to build up through February 24, when bills must be voted out of committee. Any bill that doesn't make it out of subcommittee and committee by Friday, February 24 is dead.

- You can find a daily and two-week subcommittee schedule online at: [www.legis.iowa.gov/Schedules/meetings.aspx](http://www.legis.iowa.gov/Schedules/meetings.aspx)
- You can find daily schedules for the House and Senate online at: [www.legis.iowa.gov/Schedules/schedules.aspx](http://www.legis.iowa.gov/Schedules/schedules.aspx)
- You can find out the actions that are taken each day on bills at: <http://bit.ly/z603HM>
- You can find out the new bills introduced each day online here: <http://bit.ly/wxBbYi>

**You can expect your legislators to be busy – but not too busy to hear from you.** Make sure you let them know what issues are important to you. They are elected to represent you, and they can only do that if you let them know what is important to you!

## OTHER CAPITOL NEWS

Legislators deal with so many issues, and are flooded with hundreds of bills on every subject imaginable (case in point, there is a bill outlawing the breeding of domestic cats with Bengals). Finding a “focus” can be tough early in session when all bills are alive.

So many legislators look forward to the “funnel” deadlines like the one coming up on February 24. The list of bills still eligible for debate will be cut in half, and you will begin to see priorities emerging. It’s hard to say what those priorities will be, but we wanted to highlight a few issues that may be of interest to lowans with disabilities and their families.

### **Balancing Incentives Program (BIP) – [SF 2010](#)**

Sen. Jack Hatch introduced this bill requiring Iowa’s Medicaid Office to apply for a federal Balancing Incentives Program grant to help provide home and community-based alternatives to institutionalization. This grant requires the State to develop a no wrong door single point of entry, offer conflict free case management, and require a needs assessment. Waiver providers would then be reimbursed at a better rate.

Several providers showed up to express their support for the bill – one saying she is only reimbursed for 66% of her costs. She asked how legislators expected her to continue providing waiver services to people if they are losing money.

The subcommittee on this bill met this week and decided to continue discussions. It appears that “conflict free case management” is causing a lot of concerns and it is likely that legislators will try to define it in law. Iowa Medicaid said they have until April to write a preliminary plan, with a final detailed plan to be submitted six months later after “considerable” public input.

### **Sex Offenders in Nursing Homes - [HSB 551](#) & [SSB 3105](#)**

What to do with sex offenders that are in need of a skilled nursing facility is a pressing problem legislators want to address in 2012. The bills require nursing facilities to notify family members when sex offenders are served on premises – but some say notifying them does little to protect loved ones living alongside the sex offenders. Legislators have met several times and still have not come to an agreement on the bill.

### **Mental Health/Disability Services Redesign**

The Interim Committee on Mental Health & Disability Services (MH/DS) Redesign continues to meet on Thursday mornings at 7:30 a.m. Last week, they handed out three bill drafts that put in place the recommendations of this fall’s redesign work groups, with DHS revisions. You can find all three of these unnumbered drafts on our website at [www.infonetiowa.com](http://www.infonetiowa.com).

- [MH/DS Judicial Recommendations](#) – Things like jail diversion, mental health courts are in this bill.
- [MR/ID Terminology Changes](#) – Takes “mental retardation” out of Iowa law, and replaces it with “intellectual disability.”
- [MH/DS Redesign](#) – The meat of the work group proposals is included in this bill draft.

The interim committee plans to continue to meet on Thursday mornings at 7:30 a.m. to hear what people think about these bill drafts, and what changes they would like to see made. After hearing comments from the public, legislators will make revisions and officially file the bills. Keep an eye on our website and Facebook for updates between issues of *infoNET* – [www.infonetiowa.com](http://www.infonetiowa.com).

## Bills Introduced This Week

**Quick Reminder** – Because of space, this is the only time you'll see the full description of these bills – unless they change dramatically. You may want to keep these issues of *INFONET* and refer back to them as session moves along. You can always find the most current status of bills (updated daily) on our online bill tracker: <http://bit.ly/fZnlRH>.

### Share your thoughts on redesign with your legislators by:

**Calling your Senator**  
(515) 281-3371

**Calling your Representative**  
(515) 281-3221

**Emailing your legislators**  
<http://bit.ly/xQKh3S>

**Going to a forum near you**  
<http://bit.ly/eErVk3>

### Three ways to contact the Governor about redesign:

**Writing:**  
1007 E. Grand, Des Moines, Iowa 50319

**Calling:**  
(515) 281-5211

**Emailing:**  
<https://governor.iowa.gov/contact/>

## BILLS IN THE HOUSE

**[HF 2058 - Property Tax Exemption for Residential Care and Nursing Facilities \(Status: House Ways & Means Committee\)](#)** - Establishes a property tax exemption for nonprofit nursing home facilities, elder group homes, assisted living programs, adult day services programs or retirement facilities.

**[HF 2148 - County MH/MR/DD Services Management Plans \(Status: House Floor\)](#)** - Waives the requirement that counties submit the three-year strategic plan for mental health, mental retardation, and developmental disability services by April 1, 2012. The current strategic plan will remain in effect as the state transitions to a new (potentially regional) service system. Effective upon enactment.

**[HSB 551 - Sex Offenders in Facilities/Notification \(Status: House Human Resources Committee\)](#)** - When a person who is registered as a sex offender is committed to a nursing facility, residential care facility, or assisted living program, the clerk of the court must notify the Department of Inspections & Appeals, as well as the facility of the person's sex offender status. When accepting a new resident or tenant, a facility is also required to check the sex offender registry to find out if the person is on the list. Upon admission of the new resident who is on the sex offender registry, the facility must notify all other residents/tenants; resident emergency contacts/next of kin; operators, owners, managers and employees of that facility; and the county sheriff. The facilities must also develop and implement a written safety plan relating to the sex offender residents. Within three months of the rules being adopted, facilities must check the registry to see if any current residents are on the list, and if so, notify all persons as listed above and implement a safety plan. Effective upon enactment. Companion SSB 3105.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 6**

**HSB 582 - Voter ID (Status: House State Government Committee)** - Requires voters to show a photo ID when at the polls or when voting absentee at the county election office or at a satellite voting center. Removes residential leases and property tax statements as proof of residency. Requires people that are hospitalized or in a residential care facility and voting absentee to show a photo ID.

## BILLS IN THE SENATE

**SF 2071 - BUDGET - Supplemental FY 2012 (Status: House Floor)** - Makes supplemental appropriations for the Department of Corrections and authorizes counties to apply to the MH/MR/DD Risk Pool for additional moneys to address (and eliminate) their waiting lists for these services. These funds were made available last session to counties needing additional dollars to eliminate waiting lists or avoid cutting services. Several counties were not eligible for funding at the time, but are now and would like to access the \$5 million remaining in the fund.

**SF 2080 - Medicaid Autism Waiver (Status: Senate Human Resources Committee)** - Requires DHS to apply for an autism Medicaid waiver.

**SSB 3066 - Insurance Commission (Status: Senate Commerce Committee)** - This is the Insurance Commissioner's "clean up bill" so there are many aspects to it. Of note, the bill takes the Insurance Commissioner off the Brain Injury Commission.

**SSB 3078 - Board of Direct Care Professionals (Status: Senate State Government Committee)** - Establishes a "board of direct care professionals" and provides a certification process for individuals working as direct care professionals. Requires individuals who provide direct care services (for compensation) to be certified as "direct care associates" beginning January 1, 2014. Associates can receive advanced training to be certified as direct care professionals and also get other specialty endorsements.

**SSB 3084 - Medicaid Suspension in Jails (Status: Senate Human Resources Committee)** - Suspends (rather than terminates) Medicaid for persons in jail or a correctional facility for up to one year. Last year, legislation was passed allowing this suspension for people that are elderly or have a disability. The Federal government told the state it could not limit this suspension to that population, so this bill fixes that by allowing the suspension for any person that is receiving Medicaid. Medicaid suspension allows benefits to be reinstated upon release, rather than requiring re-application and a waiting period that could interfere with the ability of a person to get needed medications and medical treatment.

# Legislative Forums

One of the best ways to get to know your legislators, talk to them about your issues, and meet other advocates in your community is to go to a local legislative forum. Legislators and other elected officials host these on Fridays and Saturdays during the legislative session.

Here is a list for the next two weeks – a complete list is available at [www.infonetiowa.com](http://www.infonetiowa.com), or contact your legislator for more information.

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10

Clear Lake (11 am) – MH/DS Town Hall Meeting, Opportunity Village at 1200 N 9th St W, DHS Director Chuck Palmer, Sen Ragan, Rep Upmeyer

Marshalltown (NOON) - Fischer Community Center, 709 South Center St, Rep Smith & Sen Soddors

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11

Keosauqua (8 am) - Village Cup & Cakes, 202 Main Street, Sen Chelgren

Emmetsburg (8:30 am) - Chamber of Commerce, 1121 Broadway Street, Sen Kibbie & Rep Wittneben

Oskaloosa (8:30 am) - Eggs and Issues at Smokey Row, Downtown Oskaloosa, Sen Reilly & others

Ankeny (9-11 am) - Neveln Center, 406 SW School Street, Rep Koester & Sen Whitver

Clinton (9 am) - Clinton Chamber of Commerce, 721 S 2nd Street Clinton Area Legislators

Council Bluffs (9 am) - Wilson Middle School Auditorium, 715 21st Street, Council Bluffs Legislators

Oxford Junction (9 am) - Schakey's, 106 West Broadway, Sen Hancock

Waukee (9:30 a.m.) - Waukee City Council Chamber, 230 HWY 6, Sen Behn & Rep Watts

Emmetsburg (10 am) – Chamber of Commerce, 1121 Broadway, Sen Kibbie & Rep Wittneben

Pocahontas (11 am) - Pizza Ranch, 211 North Main Street, Sen Kibbie

Sioux City (11 am) - Jitters Café, 4021 Floyd Blvd, Rep Hall

DeWitt (11:30 am) - DeWitt Community Center 512 10th Street, Sen Bowman

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17

Cedar Falls (4:30 pm) - AEA 267, 3712 Cedar Heights Drive, Black Hawk Legislators

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Burlington (7:15 am) - Greater Burlington Partnership, 610 N 4th St, Suite 200 – Reps Cohoon & Sands, Sen Courtney

Fairfield (7:30 am) - Fairfield Inn, 2200 W Burlington, Must RSVP 641/472-2111 Rep Hanson Greiner Klein

Newton (7:30 am) - Jasper County Farm Bureau, 425 First Avenue East, Sen Black

Algona (8:00 am) - Public Library, 210 North Phillips Street, Sen Kibbie & Rep Wittneben

Anamosa (9:00 am) - Maquoketa Valley REC, 109 N. Huber Street, Sen Hancock

New Hampton (9:00 am) - Farm Bureau Building, 504 West Milwaukee Street, Sen Wilhelm

Newton (9:00 am) – League of Women Voters Forum, Hy-Vee, 1501 First Ave East, Sen Black

Carroll (10:00 am) - Carroll County ISU Extension, 1205 W US HWY 30 #G, Sen Kettering

Harlan (10:00 am) - Harlan Community Library, 718 Court Street, Sen Boettger & Rep Drake

Humboldt (10:00 am) – TBD, Sen Kibbie

Cedar Rapids (10:30 am) - Mercy Medical, Hallagen Center, 701 10<sup>th</sup> St, Cedar Rapids/Linn County Legislators

Charles City (11:30 am) - Aromas Coffee Shop, 105 N Main St, Sen Wilhelm

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**Representing you in  
Congress are:**

Sen. Charles Grassley  
Sen. Tom Harkin  
[US Representative]

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**Your State Senator is:**

[Senator]  
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## CAPITOL CALENDAR

**Monday, February 13** – Autism Advocacy & Awareness Day on the Hill – 9:30 – 10:30 a.m. in the First Floor Rotunda of the State Capitol; events all day.

**Thursday, February 16** – Iowa Department of Human Rights Open House – 7:30 – 8:30 a.m. at the Lucas State Office Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

**Tuesday, February 21** – Iowa Caregivers Association Legislative Reception & Public Forum – Botanical Center, 909 Robert Ray Drive, Des Moines

**Thursday, February 23** – State Rehabilitation Council Legislative Breakfast – 7:00 – 9:00 a.m. in the Legislative Dining Room, Basement of State Capitol

**Friday, February 24** – First Funnel Deadline – This is the date when bills need to be voted out of committee. If a committee fails to take action on a bill by this date, the bill is “dead” and won't be discussed again this year.