

Budget Bill Uses Citizen Ideas for Savings

Earlier this session, House Democrats encouraged Iowans to offer ways for the state to save money as the fiscal year 2010 budget was crafted. Hundreds of Iowans, including many state employees, offered their ideas through a special website. This week, the House passed House File 809, the administration and regulation budget, incorporating some of those ideas.

House File 809 deals with thirteen state departments, agencies and offices, including the state auditor, treasurer, secretary of state, governor, departments of administration, commerce, ethics and cam-

paign finance, human rights, inspection and appeal, management, revenue, the drug policy office, and the rebuild Iowa office. The bill will cut state spending for these offices by \$11.5 million, or about 12%.

Based on suggestions received on the website, the bill requires that spending on the state's fleet of vehicles be reduced by 7.5%, that more oversight is required before out-of-state travel and reimbursement for meals and other employee expenses are approved, and that utility costs be reduced by 10% through energy conservation practices.

Protecting Children

Although the departments and agencies covered in this appropriation bill are receiving decreases in funding, the bill does increase funding for the Child Advocacy Board, which administers the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program. CASA trains volunteers to help protect the interests of abused and neglected children. The program went statewide last year, and Legislators did not want to cut back this program, which protects the most vulnerable children.