

Legislature to Focus on Jobs, Economy

As Iowa begins to emerge from the national recession, the 2010 Legislature will focus on creating jobs and building a strong, diversified economy.

In addition to helping small businesses, the state will focus on key industries that hold the greatest potential for helping small businesses and growing Iowa's economy -- renewable energy, information solutions, and advanced manufacturing.

In today's rapidly changing global economy, legislators will also work to ensure all Iowans get a world-class education and have the high-tech skills they need to land a good-paying job.

Some of the other issues under consideration in 2010 include:

- Following an interim committee focused on job training, and an Auditor's report that was somewhat critical of Iowa's job training program, the Legislature could act upon some recommendations that require greater oversight by the Department of Revenue of job training tax credits. In addition, the job training formula could also be changed to allow for apprenticeships. All changes would be designed to make the programs more effective and the funding more transparent.
- Another initiative to create jobs is the IJOBS program established last year. The Governor and Legislature established this program to create jobs, rebuild communities impacted by the 2008 summer severe weather, invest in Iowa's infrastructure, and promote long-term economic growth. Funded by state gaming revenues, \$100 million will be available next year to improve Iowa's infrastructure and create jobs.
- As the recession continued throughout 2009, it became obvious that Iowa workers were not receiving sufficient notice before losing their job, as required under the federal WARN Act. This is because Iowa's economy is made up of many small employers who are not covered under the federal law. Legislation could require employers to provide notice to Workforce Development when there is a layoff of more than 25 employees. This would allow the activation of their Rapid Response Team sooner to assist people in transitioning to a new job. Workers from small companies would also then have the same benefits as those workers in larger companies.
- As Iowans continue to answer the country's call for military personnel, the separation from "normal working life" continues. This includes spouses of military personnel that follow a service man or woman to a new location in the country. These spouses are currently not eligible for unemployment since they voluntarily quit their job. Legislation could address this issue by allowing spouses that lose their job due to trailing military personnel, to be eligible for unemployment. Employer's accounts would not be charged under these circumstances.