

The Senate Side

March 6, 2008

by State Senator John Putney

The Senate was extremely busy with committee action this week as the Legislature faced its first self-imposed deadline of the 2008 session.

In order for a bill not to be declared dead at the end of the first “funnel” week, it must be approved by at least one committee in the Senate or House. The deadline, which comes roughly at the middle of the session, plays a key role in limiting the number of bills on the Legislature’s agenda. While the funnel does not apply to tax, appropriations or leadership bills, it does help eliminate hundreds of measures.

Since my party is in the minority in both the Senate and House this year, many of our sponsored initiatives did not survive the first funnel and did not make it out of committee. Among them: a bill to help increase access to employer-provided insurance coverage for people who work in small businesses, legislation that dealt with a crackdown on illegal immigrants in Iowa receiving tuition and state money, and a bill that would prohibit libraries from allowing children under the age of 17 to check out video materials that are R-rated. In addition, my caucus introduced a bill last year that would guarantee incoming freshmen at Iowa’s public universities immunity from increased tuitions while they were enrolled in school. That, also, has gone by the wayside while the majority party has failed to introduce a solution to the record-high levels of student loan debt in Iowa

Of course, my annual bill to force schools to **abide by state law** and not commence school before Labor Day died in the funnel, also. But, don’t worry, I will attempt to amend any school legislation that comes before us on the floor with my “**school start date**” bill.

Other measures **that did make it** through funnel expand the size and scope of government while trampling on the rights of individuals. These measures include legislation that relinquishes local control when it comes to educating Iowa students, mandating who a business can serve and a repeal of an employer’s choice of medical providers in workers’ compensation claims.

The next benchmark of the legislative session is the second “funnel,” another self-imposed deadline that requires bills to be approved by the chamber where they originated as well as a committee in the opposite chamber. Your thoughts and opinions are important to me. Please contact me at: 515-281-3371 or john.putney@legis.state.ia.us