

IOWA TRANSPARENCY NEWSLETTER



Allow a Little Sunshine into Our State

by Jennifer L. Crull

January 11, 2011 is an important day for Iowa taxpayers. This is the day that House File 6 was introduced, which will require the creation of a searchable Website of all government transactions. The Iowa Legislative Website's description of the House File states that:

A bill for an act requiring the development of a searchable budget database and internet site for the public to access the details of the expenditure of state tax revenues and a searchable tax rate database and internet site for the public to access the details of each tax rate for all taxing districts in the state.¹

This bill is supported by 39 State Representatives and is a huge victory for Sunshine legislation in Iowa. A list of all the State Representatives that support this

legislation is included in Table One. Since the State Legislature has been meeting, House File 6 has been replaced by House File 94, which is coming from the entire State Government Committee. This committee is made up of 23 members of the House, and both Republicans and Democrats serve on this committee.

House Republican Leader Kraig Paulsen's January 21, 2011 email, "The Paulsen Perspective," lists these following details from the bill:

The database will compile information so Iowans will be able to easily access where their tax dollars are being spent and for what purpose. The information in the database will include those records from all state departments and all three branches of government.

[If adopted] Beginning January 1, 2013, the Department of Management must create this free database that allows the public access to the following:

- Name and location of the entity or recipient of state funds
- Amount of state funds expended
- Funding source
- Budget program or activity
- Purpose
- Expected outcome
- Past performance
- State audits or reporting related to the expenditure

Not only will this searchable database allow Iowans closer access and increased accountability with their state government, but it will aid in helping to find even more budget savings and effi-

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ciencies. Iowa taxpayers deserve to know where every one of their dollars is being spent.²

The issue of Sunshine also came up during Governor Branstad's fifth inaugural address on January 14, 2011. During his speech, Gov. Branstad stated the following:

Third, it is time to restore integrity and transparency to our government decision-making processes. In Iowa, we have prided ourselves on limited, but quality, government services. When government said it would do something, it did it, and for the right reasons. Our problems were serious, but manageable, and, as people of good faith, we rolled up our sleeves and solved them.

But we've gotten off track. We've over-promised and under-delivered, turning solutions into problems. Iowans deserve better. We

will get back on track with a slimmer, better managed and sustainable government you can count on when you need it. And it will start by opening up to the people our budgets, briefings and the like. Sunshine remains the best cure for what ails our government.³

Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds also spoke of "a limited, transparent, smaller government."⁴ So now we know that our top officials support the creation of Sunshine legislation, and over a third of all House Members have signed on in support of this legislation. But what is next? This bill must first be passed by both the House and Senate before it reaches the Governor's desk to be signed into law.

While 39 members have signed on in support of the original legislation, this bill needs a majority (51) of the House members to vote for it. The Republicans do control the House, but it is still important for your State Representative to hear from you about your position on this issue. The April 2010 *Iowa Transparency Newsletter* dealt with the report "Following the Money: How the 50 States Rank in Providing Online Access to Government

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www.LimitedGovernment.org***

Table One: Representatives Supporting House File 6

Representatives	Party	District	County
Peter Cownie	Republican	60	Polk
Pat Grassley	Republican	17	Butler
Dwayne Alons	Republican	4	Sioux
Chuck Soderberg	Republican	3	Plymouth
Bob Hager	Republican	16	Allamakee
Walt Rogers	Republican	20	Black Hawk
Guy Vander Linden	Republican	75	Mahaska
Ross Paustian	Republican	84	Scott
Steven Olson	Republican	83	Clinton
Thomas Sands	Republican	87	Louisa
Royd Chambers	Republican	5	O'Brien
Dave Heaton	Republican	91	Henry
Dawn Pettengill	Republican	39	Benton
Scott Raecker	Republican	63	Polk
Linda Mill	Republican	82	Scott
Greg Forristall	Republican	98	Pottawattamie
Julian Garrett	Republican	73	Warren
Mark Lofgren	Republican	80	Muscatine
Brian Moore	Republican	25	Jackson
Cecil Dolecheck	Republican	96	Ringgold
Mary Ann Hanusa	Republican	99	Pottawattamie
Daniel Huseman	Republican	53	Cherokee
Betty De Boef	Republican	76	Keokuk
Jack Drake	Republican	57	Cass
Dave Deyoe	Republican	10	Story
Kim Pearson	Republican	42	Polk
Chris Hagenow	Republican	59	Polk
Kevin Koester	Republican	70	Polk
Jeff Kaufmann	Republican	79	Cedar
Matt Windschitl	Republican	56	Harrison
Jarad Klein	Republican	89	Washington
Joel Fry	Republican	95	Clarke
Nick Wagner	Republican	36	Linn
Gary Worthan	Republican	52	Buena Vista
Josh Byrnes	Republican	14	Mitchell
Ron Jorgensen	Republican	54	Woodbury
Erik Helland	Republican	69	Polk
Jeff Smith	Republican	6	Dickinson
Chip Baltimore	Republican	48	Boone

Source: "BillBook," The Iowa Legislative, <<http://coolice.legis.state.ia.us/Cool-ICE/default.asp?Category=BillInfo&Service=DspHistory&ga=84&key=0012C>> accessed on January 25, 2011.

Spending Data." That report graded Iowa with an F, since we have no transparency Website about government spending.⁵ This House File is the first major

step in opening up government spending and allowing the taxpayers a glimpse of how their money is being spent.

Public Interest Institute also distributes a weekly newspaper column, *In the Public Interest*.

Watch the opinion section of your local paper for these commentaries on public policy issues and if you don't see *In the Public Interest*, contact your local editor and request he or she publish *In the Public Interest*.

Thank you for your continued support of Public Interest Institute.

If you would like to contact your member of the House and express your thoughts on this piece of legislation do so by visiting the following website, <http://www.legis.iowa.gov/Legislators/house.aspx>, for the email address for your House Member, or you may write to them at Iowa Legislature, Second Floor, State Capitol, Des Moines, IA 50319. I would encourage you to follow this bill through the Senate also. The Website for the Senate members is <http://www.legis.iowa.gov/Legislators/senate.aspx>. It will be very important to contact your State Senator and let them know your ideas about this bill.

It is exciting to see that some Sunshine may finally be com-

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ing to Iowa, but in order for the clouds to part and let the sunshine in, the people of Iowa have to let their elected officials know how important this piece of legislation is to the state. Remember, you can also track all the bills on IowaVotes.org. You can add bills to your watch list and this will allow you to stay up-to-date with what is happening with each bill that you are interested in. Let's help the state of Iowa finally enjoy some Sunshine.

Thank you for your continued support of Public Interest Institute.

Your support helps us provide public policy research on the issues facing both Iowa and the nation as well as the importance of free-market and constitutional ideas.

Wohlschlegel, "Following the Money: How the 50 States Rank in Providing Online Access to Government Spending Data," *U.S. PIRG Education Fund*, April 2010, p. 5, <<http://cdn.publicinterestnetwork.org/assets/b3ba157e28d82952ee5b7a3f84e88499/Following-the-Money-USPIRG.pdf>> accessed on January 25, 2011.

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Endnotes

¹ "BillBook," The Iowa Legislative, <<http://coolice.legis.state.ia.us/Cool-ICE/default.asp?Category=BillInfo&Service=DspHistory&ga=84&key=0012C>> accessed on January 24, 2011.

² Kraig Paulsen, "The Paulsen Perspective," January 21, 2011, <<http://www.iowahouserepublicans.com/>> accessed on January 24, 2011.

³ Gov Branstad's Inaugural Address, January 14, 2011, <<https://governor.iowa.gov/2011/01/the-governors-inaugural-address/>> accessed on January 24, 2011.

⁴ Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds' Inaugural Address, January 14, 2011, <<https://ltgovernor.iowa.gov/?p=94>> accessed on January 14, 2011.

⁵ Phineas Baxandall and Kari

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www.LimitedGovernment.Org

and

www.IowaVotes.Org