

## SOMETIMES NO NEWS IS...

Sometimes no news is big news at the capitol. This week, the lack of action on two topics made news.

Last week we reported the nuclear power bill (HF561) was amended in subcommittee and voted out to be considered in the full Senate Commerce Committee. The Committee was scheduled to vote on the bill mid-week; however, the meeting was cancelled at the last minute. The lobby rumor mill (the official source of all rumors) had Senate leadership needing more time to solidify the “yes” majority in the Committee. In Capitol jargon, this year is a “Pension Year.” This traditionally means pension legislation can/will be proposed and discussed during session. The Public Retirement Systems Committee, which is charged with reviewing and evaluating the State’s pension systems (including the Iowa Public Employees’ Retirement System (IPERS), the Municipal Fire and Police Retirement System of Iowa (Code Chapter 411), the Department of Public Safety Peace Officers’ Retirement System (PORS), and the Judicial Retirement System), meets during the interim prior to the even numbered pension years. This Committee hears overviews of the systems’ status and evaluates whether or not recommendations to the General Assembly for changes to benefits, contribution rates or other changes are desired or needed.

The Committee met earlier last fall over two days, taking testimony from actuaries, pension system heads, beneficiaries, employer groups, and the legislative services agency, but did not discuss making any recommendations for legislative pension changes. This left a third somewhat unusual final meeting to be scheduled early during session to make final determinations about any recommendations. That final meeting happened Monday.

The Committee’s final recommendation seems to be to make no recommendations. We may not see a pension bill debated this session. Even some largely technical bills filed by systems may fall by the wayside. With a Committee made up evenly of both Republicans and Democrats, sometimes with widely differing views on pension system structure and policy, there seems to be little momentum to move toward major changes this year. With complex issues like property tax, and tax increment finance, and mental health reform dominating the early-session landscape, legislators seem to have little appetite to add yet another complex, potentially political issue into the mix right now.

Switching gears from what didn’t happen to what did: Multiple gun-related bills and resolutions have been introduced in the last few weeks in the House (e.g., HJR2005, and HF2114, HF2115 and HF2198). HJR 2005 was introduced last week with 36 bill sponsors and considered in subcommittee this week. This resolution is an amendment to the Iowa Constitution described as an amendment that would add to the Iowa Constitution the rights conferred in the Second Amendment the U.S. Constitution. To become effective, (like all Iowa constitutional amendments) HJR2005 must be adopted by the House and Senate this session, adopted by the House and Senate in the next General Assembly and approved by a vote of the Iowa voters. If HJR2005 became law today, it would make Iowa’s Constitution one of the strictest in the country with respect to the State’s ability to control the ownership and use of arms, including limiting its ability to license, register, or impose taxes as a condition of the rights granted in the resolution. We will write more this session about gun-related legislation.

Read more at the Davis Brown Government Relations Report.

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