

# IOWA POLICE JOURNAL

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## Legislative Update

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The 2014 session of the 85<sup>th</sup> Iowa General Assembly convened on Monday, January 13<sup>th</sup>, and was scheduled to last until April 10<sup>th</sup>. It is expected to end close to the scheduled time for adjournment (the 100<sup>th</sup> day), which this year is April 22, 2014.

The Iowa State Police Association (ISPA) has had a very active and good year on the hill. First and foremost, it has been a pension year — every two years in the legislature, public pensions are examined and changes are made if needed or demanded. We are very excited to report that, with your help and grass roots efforts, up to this point we have been able to stave off changes to our pension system.

The only active bill at this point is Senate File 2233, which adds New Code Section 411.19 that provides for a state appropriation to the statewide fire and police retirement system equal to 3.79 percent of the covered earnable compensation of the members. The bill restores the standing state appropriation to the retirement system that was repealed by 2010 Acts, Chapter 1167. This Senate language is unlikely to pass the House because the governor said he will veto a state contribution, but at least we do not have a bill increasing our pension contribution. We very much appreciate your work at the local level with your legislators on the pension issue.

Because it has not been a year with several active pension initiatives to fight, most of our efforts have been concentrated on policy issues which have been detailed every week in the newsletter and on the website. We have been able to work with other law enforcement groups to pass bills beneficial to ISPA. The session will likely produce bills on sexual exploitation of a minor, human trafficking, drug control, use of global positioning devices, creation of a mass notification and emergency messaging system for use in a disaster emergency, criminal sentencing of juveniles in criminal court, suicide prevention, amendments of the privacy breach notification law, anti-harassment and anti-bullying policies, underage consumption of alcohol, rules on Taser training, changes to controlled substances list and many more.

Finally, after securing an increase for Rabiner Home last year, it looks like we will once again be able to get additional money for Rabiner. There are also several bills, like medical cannabis and texting while driving, which will not be passed. Although anything can happen in the final weeks of session, all in all, it looks to be a good year in terms of policy.

Due to all of these policies issues, we put a lot of reliance on our board. We want to take this opportunity to thank them for all their work. Every week they sifted through pages of bills, researched them on the website, read them and decide a position. This year, 344 Senate files and 99 Senate study bills have been introduced. In the House, 458 House files and 128 House study bills have been introduced. Out of these 830 bills, your board had to read, discuss and take position on almost half of them. It has been a huge job. Then there are all the amendments. Not a week has gone by without response on positions from the board, which we have appreciated immensely. And I know you all appreciate the weekly posting to the website. In addition, they have been very willing to attend committee and subcommittee meetings when asked and provide information when we need it. So a big “thank you” to current board members!

Another big “thank you” goes to all of you who have contacted your Senator and House Representative this legislative session. You have adopted the axiom “All politics is local” and have been very active on behalf of ISPA this year. This has not been lost on the legislative body. They often seek us out to understand your position on a bill. That local activity has been invaluable to our legislative success.

As legislators attempt to close this session out, they are already looking forward to the next session. Friday, March 14<sup>th</sup> was the filing deadline at the Iowa Secretary of State’s office for those legislators seeking election or re-election to the next General Assembly. Fourteen members of the current Iowa Legislature failed to file for re-election, leaving open seats to fill in November’s election. Remember that Democrats currently hold a slim 26–24 majority in the Senate over Republicans, while the GOP controls the House with a 53–47 edge. Half of the Senate’s 50 seats are on the ballot this year, while all 100 House seats will be up for grabs.

It is not too early to find out who the candidates will be in your district. Make a point to meet them and offer to put up yard signs or volunteer in some other capacity. You can find out who the candidates are in your area by going to the Secretary of State’s website at: <http://sos.iowa.gov/elections/pdf/2014/primary/candlist.pdf>. Remember that the odd-numbered Senate seats (1–49) and all the House seats (1–100) are up this year.

It is critical that you establish personal relationships with your Senator and House Representative *before* the legislative session so that when we have issues, you can contact them and they know you are one of their constituents. Grassroots work is critical to our success every year in the legislative session, and every year it is all that keeps us from getting changes to our pensions and other issues we care about. As soon as session is over, we will also be traveling around the state to meet candidates.

If you have any questions about the current legislative session or the newsletters, please contact us or a board member. We will be posting a thorough status of files at the end of session. Thank you for the opportunity to represent you in another legislative session!