

Senator McClintock's First Two Weeks

By STATE SENATOR MCCLINTOCK
DES MOINES — On Monday, January 8th, this year's General Assembly began. It's always an honor to be representing District 42 and the people of Iowa at our state's capitol. During the first week, we heard from different legislative leaders, our Governor, Chief Justice, and Adjutant General of the Iowa National Guard

about their developments over the last year and legislative priorities for this year's session. Our second week began with the Iowa caucuses. Over a hundred thousand Iowans actively engaged in their precinct caucuses, marking the initiation of the presidential nominating process. Despite the occasional inconveniences of

television commercials and the numerous text messages associated with the caucuses, Iowans consider it a valuable privilege to play a pivotal role in selecting presidential candidates. Beyond the political sphere, the caucuses wield a considerable economic influence on the state, providing Iowans with a platform to influence candidates in

shaping their policies and agendas. Starting January 1st, another round of tax cuts took effect, resulting in a reduction in state tax withholding and allowing Iowans to retain a greater portion of their hard-earned income. This increase stems from the implementation of the most extensive income tax relief package in Iowa's

history, as passed by the Iowa Senate and progressively taking effect. Notably, this year witnessed a reduction in the top income tax rate from 6 percent to 5.7 percent. In the upcoming session, the Senate is dedicated to further diminishing income taxes for working Iowans. Increased tax relief translates to additional resources for Iowa fami-

lies to combat inflation, empowering small businesses with the means to reward their employees and reinvest in their ventures. I encourage my constituents to contact me using my legislative email with any comments, questions, or concerns. I look forward to another great week of representing the people of District 42!

Hello, Iowa House District 84 from the State Capitol!

By STATE REPRESENTATIVE THOMAS GERHOLD
DES MOINES — The second week of session was very busy and started out with Iowa caucuses, which gives Iowa the proud and important opportunity to be the first state in the nation to get up close and personal with potentially our next president of the United States. It is also a unique privilege to show just how great the people of Iowa are, excluding Old Man Winter! The Iowa House members have been very busy with committee meetings and conducting subcom-

mittee meetings on bills that could become law. I had a subcommittee on Wednesday morning for House Study Bill 518, which was filed by the Iowa Dept. of Transportation staff. The bill would like to get rid of duplicative reports currently required by law that when enacted in 2012, required an annual report on efficiency of the Road Use Tax Fund (RUTF). All legislators can get info from the DOT whenever we request it. There has also been a lot of discussion and comments about Governor Kim Reynolds' bill

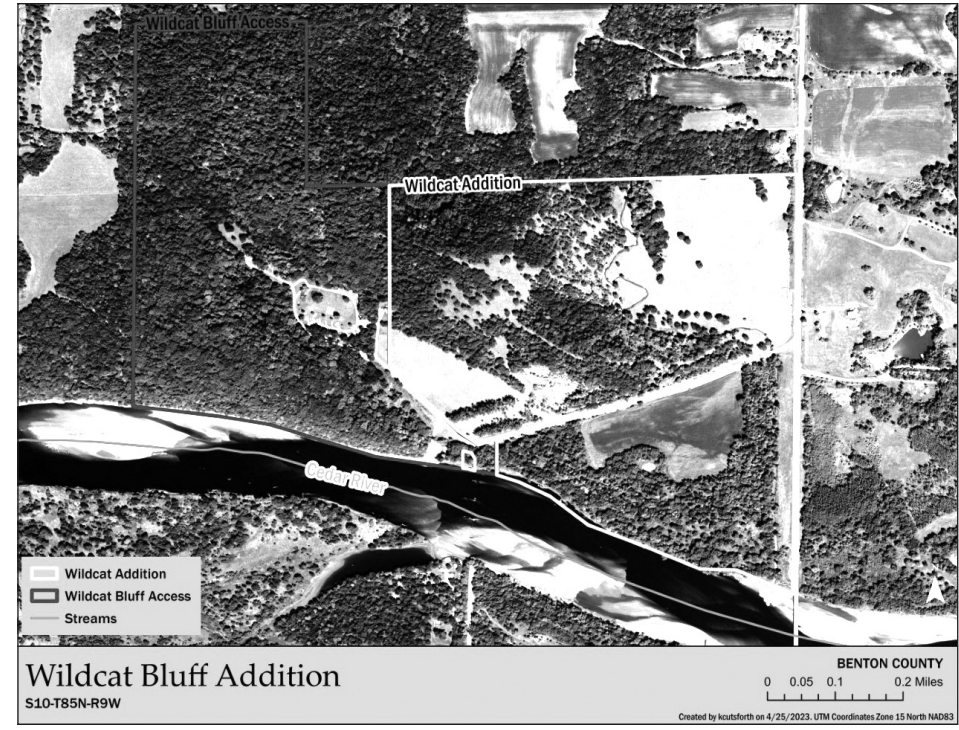
proposal (HSB 542) to make changes to Iowa's Area Education Agencies (AEAs). It is very early in the discussions, and often when a bill has the potential to have an effect statewide, it can have amendments making the bill better. I have no way of knowing what will happen with HSB 542, as it could even die in committee. The reasons Gov. Reynolds has introduced this bill are because of Iowa's special education student scores. Iowa's scores have been reported by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

as ranking 30th or worse on 9 of 12 assessments in 2017, 2019, and 2022. The Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP) show the results of the Spring 2023 Assessment at a 41% proficiency gap for students with disabilities as compared to overall student results. Also, Iowa is the only state that requires all school districts to pay into an education support agency (AEAs) and then use that same agency for special education services. Iowa also spends over \$5300 above the national average on special education funding.

Additionally, the U.S. Dept of Education has designated Iowa as "needs assistance" for implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act since 2018. If Iowa doesn't act on this, the Biden Administration could step in and determine a course of action. We've been told AEAs employ 6 times more staff than the Dept. of Education. The bill does not cut special education services to children, and it would have a very difficult time passing if it did. Iowa used to be at or close to #1 in education

nationally, but is now ranked 13th according to <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states-rankings/education>. We can do better and we will because of the outstanding people of Iowa! The last day of the first funnel week was this last Friday, and I filed a couple bills: one to increase penalties for drivers that cause an accident with farm equipment, and another to add to the Iowa code that drivers must yield to bicyclists and all pedestrians in crosswalks. Have a safe week and be careful out there!

BENTON COUNTY continued from Page 1



Wildcat Bluff Addition Map

John Beerbower of Alexandria, VA has already donated towards the project and in addition, pledged a substantial donation to the Benton County Conservation

Foundation. Now, he has utilized the Myers' Family Conservation Fund challenge grant and donated again! Beerbower said "This country provides sub-

stantial and compelling incentives for the exploitation of our natural resources. So, individuals need to stand up from time to time for conservation. We can and

should preserve some of the heritage we have enjoyed for future generations. It is a challenge and opportunity for each of us." To help keep this momentum going, we invite everyone to accept Beerbower's challenge and utilize the Myers's Family Conservation Fund challenge grant to double your impact. We have until the beginning of May 2024 to utilize the challenge grant. Williams invites anyone interested in learning more about the Wildcat Bluff expansion to email info@bentoncountyparks.com, call 319-472-4942, or go to www.benton-countyia.gov/conservation. To see other related news and press releases regarding this project, please visit www.bentoncountyia.gov/news/.

BLOOD SUPPLY continued from Page 1

blood drives and adjust hours or close Donor Centers resulting in close to 1,000 units lost. The good news is...you can help! If you had to cancel your donation, please make plans to reschedule. If you didn't have an appointment to donate, the good news is you can still make one today to assist in replenishing the blood supply," Life Serve said. In another press release, Life Serve said they are "urging community members to roll up a sleeve and give blood donation a try," and further explained the problems with retaining donors. "Donor retention is a big struggle we face at LifeServe. Many of our donors only donate

1-2 times per year, but if they all committed to giving one more blood donation this year, our blood supply would be in a much more stable state. We encourage you to Give One More in '24 to help the local blood supply," Life Serve said. Virginia Gay Hospital and the Vinton Community will host a Blood Drive on Tuesday, Jan. 30. The event will take place in the Clinic Conference Room at VGH located at 502 N 9th Ave in Vinton from 11:45 am until 3:30 pm. Appointments are encouraged for those wishing to donate. Text: LIFESERVE to 999-777, call: 800-287-4903, or visit: lifeservebloodcenter.org for more information.