

NEWS

SENATE

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Since its passage, the misinformation on this bill has been rampant, spread by city and county administrators and officials who either misunderstand the bill or are choosing government spending over taxpayers.

If a city or town is not experiencing growth, the tax levy adjustment mechanism, which is the tool used to help control the growth of spending and property taxes, does not impact their budgeting ability.

HF 718 was a large bill, but local governments haven't even gone through a budget cycle yet to truly see how it will affect their finances.

The bill will not cut money from any local entity. It only slows how fast and how much it grows, similar to how the state budget has only grown 2-3% each year since Republicans have been in the majority.

We are always happy to have a conversation about legislation and how we can improve a property tax system ranked 40th out of 50 states.

This past week I have been in meetings where we have discussed re-structuring the HHS budget bill and improving the delivery of mental health care in Iowa. We have also been looking into some of the details of Governor Reynolds' proposals.

SIECK

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is now available on Iowa Finance Authority's website. The program provides an Iowa tax credit for agricultural asset owners to lease their land, equipment, and/or buildings to beginning farmers. Applicants to the program must be a resident of Iowa, 18 years of age and have a net worth of no more than \$833,000. Applicants must have sufficient education, training, or experience for the anticipated farm operations and have access to adequate working capital, equipment, and other items that are necessary to operate the farm.

Applications for the program are processed on first-come, first-completed basis and will be accepted until August 1, or until all the tax credit allocation has been awarded. More information can be found at <https://www.iowafinance.com/beginning-farming-programs/>

Time for Tax Returns

The IRS recently announced that Monday, Jan. 29, 2024, is the official start date of the nation's 2024 tax season and the agency will begin accepting and processing those 2023 tax returns. An estimated 128.7 million individual tax returns are expected to be filed by the April 15, 2024, tax deadline.

Despite opening day not being until the 29th, most software companies accept electronic submissions and hold them until the IRS is ready to process. IRS Free File will also be available on IRS.gov starting Jan. 12. Some of the new and expanded tools from the IRS this tax filing season include:

Extended hours at many taxpayer assistance centers nationwide.

Increased help available on the toll-free line and an expanded customer call back feature designed to significantly reduce wait times.

An enhanced IRS Individual Online Account that includes chat, the option to schedule and cancel future payments, revise payment plans and validate and save bank accounts.

SCAMS

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looking for: access to your money.

The romantic cheats are criminal deadbeats. They will seem genuine because they have created a fake online identity and use social engineering to prey on potential victims. That means they do their homework to profile their target so they are able to take advantage of someone's vulnerability, generosity or empathy. They manipulate and endear themselves to build an illusion of trust and affection over a period of time.

Some scammers even propose marriage. Sooner or later, they will ask for money or trick you into making an investment. They may ask for gift cards or cash to buy a plane ticket to come for a visit, or to pay for medical expenses or other life emergency. They may pretend to be in the military and appeal to your sense of patriotism.

According to data from the FTC's Consumer Sentinel Network, Americans filed nearly 70,000 reports of romance scams in 2022 with financial losses reaching \$1.3 billion. As with any romantic situation, online or in person, it's better

to be safe than sorry.

For example, if a new love interest asks for your bank account information, date of birth or Social Security number, let that raise a red flag. End all contact before the scammer is able to ghost you after taking your money and stealing your identity.

Q: How can people protect themselves and report fraud?

A: First, don't be ashamed. Fraud can happen to anyone. If you suspect identity fraud or a romance scam, file a police report and contact your financial institutions to protect your accounts.

Ask credit bureaus to monitor your identity for suspicious activity or put in place a security freeze.

Report the suspicious activity to the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center. Be prepared to share records, such as emails, addresses, phone numbers, financial transactions and receipts.

When using social media, be wary of messages from people you don't know. Tighten your privacy settings.

Scammers harvest posts and profiles to build an online relationship with their target to seem like it's a match made in heaven. Digital hustlers also

will use flattering compliments, pretend to share acquaintances and interests to ingratiate themselves with their targets. They're looking to hook someone into building an online relationship.

Be guarded about the information you share online. Also tread cautiously if the person wants to switch gears and move your conversation from where you first met to continue on a private messaging board. Criminal imposters are looking to cover their tracks. Also be mindful that a request for explicit photos is an invitation for extortion. Don't do it.

If an online romance partner won't meet in person, keeps asking for money and sounds too good to be true, trust your gut instinct. Confide in a trusted friend or family member to help protect yourself from a broken heart and an empty bank account.

Report scams to:

The Iowa Attorney General <https://www.iowaattorney-general.gov/for-consumers/file-a-consumer-complaint>

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) <https://www.ic3.gov/>

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) <https://ReportFraud.ftc.gov>



TAX

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imposes an unfair and costly tax on the transfer of property, land, and other assets from the deceased family member to heirs of family farms and small businesses.

This tax – which is known as the estate tax or the death tax – represents double taxation at its worst. Iowa families grieving the loss of a loved one should not face an enormous tax bill from the federal government just to continue the family tradition of farming or keep their small business open and

operational.

On my 36 County Tour, I have spoken to too many farmers and small business owners who are fearful that their children and grandchildren will not be able to uphold the family tradition because the death tax would require them to sell land, equipment, and other assets just to pay the enormous tax bill levied by the federal government.

I've also had several conversations with members of my Agriculture Advisory Board who are concerned – like I am – that the next generation of Iowa farmers and producers face financial hurdles and other challenges

when it comes to farming, which are only exacerbated by the death tax. It's absolutely infuriating and unacceptable.

That's why I recently led 162 of my colleagues in introducing the Death Tax Repeal Act to permanently repeal the death tax, ensure that hardworking families, farmers, and small businesses keep more of their hard-earned money, and strengthen family-owned-and-operated enterprises in Iowa.

My bill – which enjoys support from 194 organizations across the country – would enable these multigenerational businesses to continue

to support their families without having to pay a devastating tax upon the death of a family member. It's my belief that our families are already taxed enough as it is. President Biden doesn't need to extract more money from hardworking farmers and businesses in rural America to fund his reckless spending policies and Green New Deal agenda.

By fully eliminating the death tax, we can keep China away from our farmland, allow family farms and small businesses to succeed, and encourage the next generation of Iowa farmers and business owners to

plant their roots in rural Iowa, support our main streets, and contribute to our economy.

Serving on both the House Agriculture Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee, I will continue to be a strong voice for Iowa farmers and small businesses who deserve lower taxes and peace of

mind.

We are government together, and your thoughts and opinions matter to me. Please contact my office at Feenstra.House.Gov or by phone at 202-225-4426 if I can ever be of assistance. I am proud to represent our families, farmers, main street businesses, and rural communities in Congress.

MEMORY

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giving it a try.

Sugar, my feline roommate really likes sitting or sleeping in the bay window. She has enjoyed all of the activity snow removal causes. I appreciate the fact she prefers to just 'look' at what is going on in the world outside of her personal domain. She hasn't ventured outside of our apartment more than a couple of times.

I can leave the door open while I

unload groceries, etc, from my car and she just sits there as if to say "Don't worry, I won't let any of the neighborhood dogs and cats come in."

Since she hasn't really seen another cat since she was seven weeks old, I don't think she has a clue she is one.

Another of my random winter storm thoughts is I am so grateful I do NOT have to think about walking the path to the outhouse in this weather!

That "path" was a part of my life for the first 21 years of my existence.

I guess that could be my low "bar" of luxury!

In this weather, I say a quick "Thank you, Lord for all of your blessings." He knows what I mean!

I have a batch of dough in the refrigerator awaiting my attention. I need to get some rolls baked for the good Samaritans that have been so helpful to me. If this weather keeps up, I may just have to start a bakery!

So far, I haven't seen any young sledders on my hill. If I do, and ask nicely, do you suppose they would let me take a turn? At least I can dream about it, can't I?

DARKNESS

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dedication and change, but with that, recovery is possible.

Whether you choose treatment, AA/NA (and others), other peer support groups, or taking your recovery into your own hands, there are some core components that need to happen to gain a better chance of being successful.

You can start doing this by surrounding yourself with positive supports, changing your play-grounds by not frequenting the

same places, gaining healthy coping skills and taking it one day at a time.

To finish, I always tell my patients, make sure you are addressing your mental health as well as your substance use. A beautiful life is waiting for you, but you just need to take that first step in admitting to yourself you have a problem and asking for help.

Nicola Park LAC, LPC-MH is a licensed mental health professional/counselor (LPC-MH) and a licensed addictions counselor (LAC) at Avera Behavioral Health

in Sioux Falls. She have been in the counseling field since 2011 and have worked in both inpatient, outpatient, and residential school settings.

Ms. Park has a masters in clinical mental health counseling and my bachelors in addictions counseling and psychology. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org and on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show providing health information based on science, built on trust, streaming live on Facebook most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.

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