



Railports could improve local job creation

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By Sen. Roger Stewart
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— Joe Jongewaard of the Iowa Department of Economic Development stopped by the Statehouse to talk with legislators about an I-JOBS proposal to increase local job opportunities around the state. This proposed legislation would expand rail service in communities to increase their marketability to wind energy manufacturers and attract jobs to the area. Railports allow companies to increase production and reduce costs by expanding their ability to transport products.

There are 2,300 potential permanent green manufacturing jobs to be gained across Iowa through construction of these railports. Clinton's new railport could help it move to the top of the potential site lists for companies and give our area better access to the rare opportunities found in wind energy manufacturing.

See what Jongewaard had to say about the economic potential created by expanding rail service at www.youtube.com/watch?v=cfsquLUjQec.

Clinton receives grants

The Vision Iowa Board recently approved a marketing grant worth \$1,395.50 for the city of Clinton and another worth \$4,858.50 for the Felix Adler Memorial Association in Clinton. The money can be used for print, broadcast or new media advertising. Funding comes from a legislative appropriation for tourism marketing during the 2008 session. This grant will increase the visibility of our area as a destination when people make their vacation plans.

Legislature focuses on budget

Everything the Legislature will do this session is shaped by the deep, lingering national recession. Middle-class Iowans, small businesses and other employers have been hit hard. The state of Iowa is feeling the pinch too.

That's why Republicans and Democrats at the Iowa Capitol are continuing to closely examine all state spending and tighten the state's budget belt.

This includes:

- Holding the line or cutting spending for most state programs and services
- Not raising taxes on Iowans

- Rethinking and reorganizing how state government works
- Saving taxpayers \$60 million a year by approving an early retirement program
- Considering reforms to corporate tax incentives, including cutting spending on tax breaks and ensuring more accountability for taxpayers

All of these elements and more were included in a budget proposal outlined Jan. 27 by Gov. Chet Culver. His plan responds to the concerns of Iowans who want a responsible state budget that focuses limited resources on creating good-paying jobs, maintaining a strong education system and ensuring quality health care for more Iowans.

In the coming weeks, legislators will examine the details of the governor's plan. As we move ahead with developing our own plan, I want to hear your suggestions for how we can best balance the state budget, provide essential services to Iowans, and lay the foundation for a strong recovery from the national recession.

*Roger Stewart, a Democrat from Preston, is a member of the Iowa Senate representing District 13.
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