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Civility



As noted last week, Pres. Biden said in the State of the Union address, “Let’s stop seeing each other as enemies and start seeing each other for who we really are: Fellow Americans.”

Why are we seeing each other as “enemies?”

Andrew Smith suggested that “People fear what they don’t understand and hate what they can’t conquer.”

Taking liberty with a few words: **“People fear *who* they don’t understand and hate *who* they can’t defeat.”**

A step toward civility: **spend more time trying to *understand*, rather than trying to be *understood*.**

Funding Education in Iowa – a continuing focus

The Des Moines Register ran an article captioned: **“Iowa Republicans boost school funding by 2.5%, Democrats say it isn’t enough.”**



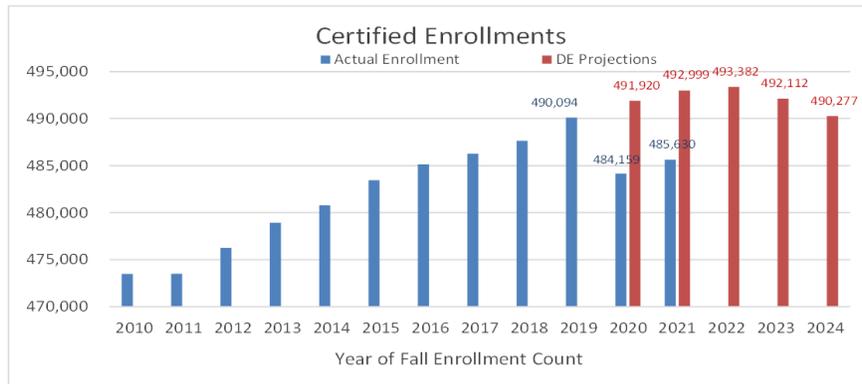
Shawn Snyder



Phil Jeneary

Before jumping into the sufficiency debate it is good to know the facts first. That’s what happened at Wednesday’s TACI Town Hall.

Thanks to **Shawn Snyder** (Associate Executive Director, Government Relations & School Finance) and **Phil Jeneary** (Government Relations Director) of the Iowa Association of School Boards, received the “*Readers Digest*” version of a 7.5-hour course in just 50 minutes.



Source: Iowa Department of Education

Topics:

- Dillion’s Rule:
 - Schools can only do what is expressly authorized in law or rule.
 - 2016: some opportunity to innovate if law doesn’t prohibit it.
- Revenues and expenditures
- COVID stimulus Federal Funding
- Enrollment: 485,630 students, down 20,000 from 1998 high
 - down 4,464 from 2019 to 2021.
- Iowa’ School Finance Formula
- School Property taxes – types and levies
- Student First Scholarship proposal & status of charter school expansion

Phil said that the IASB was monitoring **200 bills this session that impacted Iowa education.** Dillon’s Rule at work!

The slide deck and an audio recording of the event may be found on the [Town Hall website](#).

The next **TACI Town Hall, Wednesday, March 23 at 4:30 PM** will be a continuation of the discussion:

- Q&A regarding previous Town Hall on funding, past & present
- A review of the proposed "Student First Scholarship" legislation
- An update on the "Charter Schools Expansion Act" enacted in 2021.

The Zoom link will be provided in next week’s TACI Topics

A look at Broadlawns finances ...



At one time, “medical care for the indigent” was the responsibility of local citizens and was paid for through property taxes. Today, with federal and state programs in place, is property tax support still appropriate?

Consider the following figures from the June 30, 2021, audited financial statements:

Payor Mix:

- Medicare (31%) relatively constant
- **Medicaid (39%), down 7% from 2019**
- **Private pay (27%), up 7% from 2019**
- **Charity care: (3%) \$14,859,091,**
 - **down from \$16,566,653** the previous year.

Property Tax revenue: \$73,224,440 annually, up from \$69,292,883.

Would mental health services be a better use of Polk County taxpayers' money? Or maybe a direct reduction in Polk County property tax bills?

Central Iowa Water Works



As discussed at the [February 9, TACI Town Hall](#), the West Des Moines Water Works (WDMWW) Board of Trustees joined those of Des Moines Water Works Board (DMWW), and the Urbandale Water Utility (UWU) to work toward a “Central Iowa Water Works” (CIWW).

In a 28-E agreement can be negotiated, and enough communities in the region agree to participate, the new utility could become operational by early 2023.

Ted Corrigan, DMWW CEO and General Manager, provided the following update:

- The following additional organizations have passed resolutions indicating their interest in participating in further discussions: City of Ankeny, City of Clive, City of Norwalk, City of Waukee, and the Xenia Rural Water District.
- A [draft 28E Agreement](#) has been shared with all communities who purchase water from DMWW on a wholesale basis.

The following websites provide additional information:

[“Central Iowa Regional Water Updates”](#) on the DMWW website.

[“Information Regarding Water Regionalization”](#) on the WDM website.

[“Regional Water Utility Information Center”](#) on the UWU website

Polk County Water and Land Legacy Bond Program

Jessica Lown, Community Outreach Supervisor (Polk County Conservation) provided the following update:

Polk County Conservation is requesting its first disbursement of bond funds totaling \$21 million dollars.



The dollars will be used to

- Acquire and upgrade Sleepy Hollow Sports Park
- Support the ICON Water Trails
- Make needed improvements at Yellow Banks Park, Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, and various trail systems.

The TACI In-Basket

Editor's note: In the spirit of civility and brevity, latitude has been taken, where needed, with the responses. Hopefully, the intent and spirit of the email has been maintained.

Address contributions and thoughts to: Pres@taxpayersci.org.

TACI Town Halls:

"I continue to be impressed with the level of participants you are getting. But equally, I commend you for speaking up on some other matters, like civility in our discussions. If we don't get some reason and understanding into public life, I'm afraid we're all sunk. And history will likely show that no one but ourselves caused it to happen. I enjoyed the opportunity to sit in again."

"You're doing a great job in creating an institution that organizes information and brings an array of presenters together to talk about issues of common interest. It doesn't happen overnight, but by getting true experts and giving them a fair and equitable arena in which to present, you will continue to attract a growing number of good people..."

Annual meeting symposium on pending tax reform efforts:

"I think Jared is one of the best non-partisan state tax policy experts in the nation."

Focus on Education:

"Interesting presentation. Might want to contact someone from Iowa Alliance for Choice in Education"

"Good information about funding. I would ask the same question AJ Crabill might ask: Outcomes?"

"Over the last 30 years, improvement in student outcomes for Iowa students ranks 49th out of 50th trailing only Alaska"

"Forget the other issues. Focus on education!"

"Thank you for keeping these important conversations moving forward!"

The Tyranny of the Majority:

"Thanks for presenting the concept. More personal research to be done."

"The two-party system is not in our nation's best interest. If it continues, tyranny and resulting revolution, will be the inevitable outcome."

"Are you suggesting a parliamentary system, where the minority have an unwarranted power?"

"Break up the cabals. Divided government is the only way."

"I used to vote for the best person. It seems when they get elected, they are force to follow the party line, regardless of how they ran."

In the Public Interest Award:



"Great going Des Moines! Why isn't there a law that everything should be completely bid and outsourced?"

Polk County Water & Land Legacy Bond Endorsement:

From the archives: "Hi- curious why Polk County is now asking for more taxation for "water" when they have failed to reduce outrageous property taxes as they promised. A minute reduction is NOT reasonable. Where is your TACI outrage?"

Property Taxes:

“Problem is POLK COUNTY, which is severely democrat tax and spend individuals all of whom have significant wealth, so it seems to me they put all their “pie in the sky” spending on the backs of hard WORKING property owners backs.”

*Please forward this notice to your friends, colleagues and neighbors who share your interest in
"Vibrant, just, and safe Central Iowa communities."*



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