



MINUTES

International Relations Committee

Monday, January 28, 2019

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Zach Nunn, Chairperson
Senator Jeff Edler
Senator Kevin Kinney

Representative Ako Abdul-Samad
Representative Karin Derry
Representative Thomas D. Gerhold
Representative Brian K. Lohse
Representative Heather Matson

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I. Procedural Business

Background and Charge. The International Relations Committee was created by the Legislative Council in 1992. The committee's charge is as follows: develop goals and procedures that will facilitate international communication between the Iowa General Assembly and foreign governments on several different levels, including but not limited to interpersonal interaction between state legislators and legislative staff and foreign visitors, instruction about state and local democratic institutions, and the development of trade in foreign markets.

Call to Order. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Nunn at 11:05 a.m., Monday, January 28, 2019, in Room 22 of the State Capitol Building in Des Moines.

Adoption of Rules. The proposed rules were approved by voice vote of the members.

Opening Remarks. Chairperson Nunn expressed his intent to schedule biweekly committee meetings on Mondays at 11 a.m. in Room 22. He stated he intends to invite presenters to brief committee members on the international efforts and activities of, at a minimum, the Iowa National Guard, the Iowa Economic Development Authority, Des Moines Area Community College and other Iowa postsecondary institutions, and sister city and sister state sites. He further stated he wants the committee to focus on Iowa's international economic and cultural priorities rather than on national or federal issues. The other members of the committee introduced themselves and expressed their objectives for the committee.

Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

II. Presentation by Iowa Sister States

Ms. Heather Jones, Executive Director of Iowa Sister States (ISS) distributed a document describing ISS, its vision, and its mission.



Dr. Will Zhang, President, ISS Board of Directors, and teacher of English and global study courses at Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) described ISS activities. He provided an overview of ISS, a nonprofit foundation founded in 1985 to manage the official relationships established by the Governor of Iowa with foreign states. There are currently nine of these relationships. Dr. Zhang spoke about the sister state relationship with China and the Hebei Province and how much these activities have increased Iowa's business opportunities in China. Hebei has created a China-US demonstration farm, which duplicates a farm in Iowa. Businesses like Pioneer, John Deere, and Vermeer are represented there. ISS receives moneys from the state to provide two full-time staff, but relies heavily on volunteers and fundraising in its efforts to promote Iowa.

Mr. Rob Denson, President, DMACC, and an ISS board member, noted that he has traveled twice to Kosovo with ISS, and found Kosovo to be a nation very interested in vocational training programs. He observed that the U.S. Government's Millennium Challenge Corporation has awarded a grant to Kosovo to increase work in the energy trades. Iowa's reputation is well known in Kosovo. Iowa needs a global workforce for a global economy. Mr. Denson said he can envision a time when Iowa could assist in training people in Kosovo and those people could come to live temporarily in Iowa to work in industries experiencing shortages of skilled workers.

Ms. Teresa Parmenter, President-elect, ISS, and Governor of the Iowa Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), observed that sport is a universal language, and cultural exchanges allow youth to broaden their knowledge of the world. She and the Iowa AAU have taken youth athletic teams to different countries for week-long camps, which she has found to be life changing for the youth — especially in Kosovo, where the nation has been deprived of sporting programs and needs assistance to increase the number of coaches in the country.



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Mr. Luca Berrone, President of SACMI, USA Ltd., and ISS Board Member, has been active with ISS since its formation. He noted that a service ISS provides is to help shepherd agreements between Iowa interests and international interests.

Ms. Kassi Bailey, ISS International Program Manager, responded to questions from the committee. She noted that ISS is a resource for sister cities and the Iowa National Guard. She noted that ISS can help with outreach to international visitors to Iowa from other countries, but as there is no formal registration process, ISS is only aware of the need if notified. She also described a sister school relationship the University of Northern Iowa maintains and ISS supports.

III. Discussion

Chairperson Nunn asked Legislative Services Agency staff to provide information regarding the committee's policies on gifts and hosting international visitors. The policies are published on the committee's Internet page. Mr. Bob Lamberti of the Legislative Information Office provided information regarding the International Fund balance for the 2019-2020 fiscal year. He noted that the Legislative Council allocates \$10,000 for each two-year legislative biennium for gifts and \$10,000 for food and entertainment. The moneys allocated do not carry over to the next General Assembly, nor can the moneys be transferred. Moneys in the gift or food and entertainment funds can only be used for their specific purposes. He identified the entities which must approve any gift accessed by a member for presentation to official international visitors and for use while on official visits to other countries; as well as those entities who can approve food and entertainment fund moneys when the committee hosts international visitors. Chairperson Nunn advised members to contact him or the Iowa Economic Development Authority with questions about gifts received from international visitors or hosts.



Chairperson Nunn observed there are opportunities to host year-round; the committee has an opportunity to be more active. He noted members are authorized to use their campaign funds for travel, including for trips organized by the Governor's Office.

IV. Materials Filed With the Legislative Services Agency

Materials distributed at or in connection with the meeting are filed with the Legislative Services Agency and may be accessed from the "Committee Documents" link on the committee's Internet site at: www.legis.iowa.gov/committees/meetings/documents?committee=661&ga=ALL

1. A document distributed by Ms. Heather Jones, Iowa Sister States.
2. Proposed Rules.