



# MINUTES

## International Relations Committee

Monday, February 17, 2020

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### MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Zach Nunn, Chairperson  
Senator Jeff Edler  
Senator Tim L. Kapucian

Representative Terry C. Baxter, Vice Chairperson  
Representative Thomas D. Gerhold  
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 and Adjournment.** The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Nunn at 12 p.m. noon, Monday, February 17, 2020, in Room 22 of the State Capitol Building in Des Moines. The meeting was adjourned at 12:51 p.m.

**Opening Remarks.** Chairperson Nunn opened the meeting by welcoming the presenters gathered to update members regarding the efforts and activities of the Iowa Sister States, Des Moines Sister Cities, and the World Food Prize Foundation, but, first and foremost, to address the committee regarding the coronavirus and how Iowa can help support efforts to arrest the spread of the virus.

### II. Coronavirus Update — Critical Needs — Iowa Sister States and Cities

Dr. William Zhang, President, Iowa Sister States, observed that he and Chairperson Nunn have been sharing information regarding efforts to help Iowa's sister states and cities in China cope with the coronavirus outbreak. He reported that Cedar Rapids' sister city Tangshan has 51 infected coronavirus cases; with fewer cases of the virus in Dubuque's sister city Handan, Davenport's sister city Langfang, Des Moines' sister city Shijiazhuang, and Muscatine's sister city Zhengding. Since the virus in Hebei Province has been relatively contained, Dr. Zhang stated, Hebei Province joined 15 other provinces in sending its doctors and nurses to Hubei Province to help fight the virus. It is difficult for Iowa companies to provide assistance as there are an overwhelming number of requests for protective gear and clothing, such as one-use gowns that everyone from medical professionals to taxi drivers need to wear. The demand has led to scarcity of and backorders for such products. Dr. Zhang noted that more than 3,000 medical professionals are infected with the virus.

Ms. Li Zhao Mandelbaum, Commissioner and Chair of Shijiazhuang Committee, Des Moines Sister Cities, noted that the outbreak has added sorrow to the organization's planning activities for the 35th anniversary of Des Moines' sister city partnership with Shijiazhuang. The organization would like to provide help, but with the high demand for necessary products, orders placed are often canceled due to the inability of the vendor to fill them.

Chairperson Nunn stated he has contacted the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management to see if the agency can identify resources that could be offered. He proposed that the committee identify a date for donated supplies to be shipped from Iowa and after Iowa's companies have had an opportunity to restock, establish a second shipping date. In response to a question, Dr. Zhang noted that warmer temperatures help reduce the infection rate, but nationally temperatures dropped last week, stimulating growth in the virus. Chairperson Nunn asked Dr. Zhang to provide a list of the top five items needed to help slow the virus infection rate. Vice chairperson Baxter noted that Meals from the Heartland may be able to provide donations. Chairperson Nunn said he would develop a press release committee that members may use to publicize the list of items most needed for donation. Representative Matson asked that all information received be available to be shared with members' caucuses and communities.



Mr. Monty Freeman, Interim Executive Director, Iowa Sister States, provided information regarding the organization's staffing and office location changes, the arrival of several Kosovo groups this spring, the formation of a new government in Kosovo, and a League of Cities event at Des Moines Area Community College to celebrate Kosovo's Independence Day.

### **III. World Food Prize Foundation — Update**

Ms. Barbara Stinson, President, World Food Prize Foundation, obtained her office the first week of January 2020, and is only the second president of the foundation since 1986. She provided updates regarding the foundation's network of contacts in Africa and strategic planning efforts and partnerships for extending the foundation's mission in Africa. She stated that it is an honor to hold the foundation's award ceremonies in the Iowa State Capitol. She also appreciates the support of the 70 donors on which the foundation relies and expressed a desire to improve matching fund donations. The foundation is proud of the depth and breadth of the youth programs it sponsors and its Iowa Youth Institute is a model other countries are interested in replicating. Senator Edler asked about the foundation's work with genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Ms. Stinson noted that the foundation is focused on CRISPR (clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats of genetic information) as a tool for feeding the world. Decisions in Europe impact the foundation, which wants to share unbiased information with the world.

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