

reported the committee had performed its duty. The report was received and the committee discharged.

The Sergeant-at-Arms announced the arrival of the President of the Senate, the Secretary of the Senate and the honorable body of the Senate.

The President was escorted to the Speaker's station and the members of the Senate were seated in the House chamber.

JOINT CONVENTION
PIONEER LAWMAKERS
FIFTY-SIXTH BIENNIAL SESSION

In accordance with House Concurrent Resolution 14 duly adopted, the joint convention was called to order, President Kramer presiding.

President Kramer announced a quorum present and the joint convention duly organized.

Iverson of Wright moved that a committee of five be appointed to escort the Pioneer Lawmakers into the House chamber.

The motion prevailed and the President appointed as such committee Jensen of Bremer and Kibbie of Palo Alto on the part of the Senate, and Finch of Story, Roberts of Carroll and Quirk of Chickasaw on the part of the House.

The committee escorted the Pioneer Lawmakers into the House chamber.

President Kramer presented Senator Andy McKean, President pro tempore of the Senate, who welcomed the Pioneer Lawmakers on behalf of the Senate.

President Kramer presented Representative Brent Siegrist, Speaker of the House, who welcomed the Pioneer Lawmakers on behalf of the House.

President Kramer presented the Honorable John Connors, member of the House who responded to the welcome.

The Honorable John Connors announced the 1981 class of legislators who were eligible to become members of the Pioneer Lawmakers and introduced the Memorial Choir who sang "On Eagle's Wings."

Honorary members of the 2001 class were the following: Mike Glover, Keith Luchtel, Larry Blixt, Jim Carney and Diane Bolender.

The Honorable John Connors presented the Honorable Arthur Neu, former Lieutenant Governor, who addressed the joint convention as follows:

It seems strange to be back up here today. I remember being here many times from 1973 through 1978, but always to introduce then Governor Bob Ray.

In reading about your problems this session, I was reminded of the General Assembly in 1967. In 1964 there was a sweep by the Democrats in the election which resulted in both houses, the Governor's Office as well as the entire executive council with but one exception, being held by that party. In the 1968 election, the Republicans regained control of the House by a very narrow margin, but the Democrats still controlled the Senate by a three vote margin. Harold Hughes was reelected as Governor.

I was one of the freshmen Senators, and it was an experience. The session was the longest ever and didn't adjourn until early July. A consensus developed as soon as warm weather arrived that the air circulation system in this wonderful old building was woefully inadequate.

What made me think of the '67 session was your struggle with school legislation. Prior to 1967 state aid to schools was minimal. The public school system was largely funded with property tax. There was a consensus that something had to be done but no agreement on how to accomplish this.

The Republicans in the House passed a school aid proposal called "The Petersen Plan", and the Senate passed a plan called "Proportionate Sharing." In addition, there was not nearly enough revenue to fund either plan, so a tax increase was unavoidable if the state was going to provide significant aid to the public schools.

Each House passed its school aid plan and the whole thing ended up in a conference committee. The committee merged the two plans, and, although it did not have authority to decide on what if any taxes were to be increased, acknowledged that the plan depended on increased revenue. The committee met with Governor Hughes and the leadership of both parties in each House. After some posturing, the school aid plan was agreed to as were the taxes to fund the aid.

The proposal was reported out and passed both Houses by a wide margin. A large majority of each party in each House supported the legislation and Iowa had its first significant aid to schools. Ironically the legislation was supported by the ISEA and the farm bureau - a modest miracle in itself I thought.

I recall a guest editorial in the Des Moines Register in 1997 (4-20-97) when California economist Arthur Laffer derided a small tax cut and also noted that "good policies always pass by the skin of their teeth...nothing truly great is ever so clear as to command a massive plurality." This is unadulterated nonsense. Some of the greatest most far reaching legislation passed by the Iowa legislature during my time passed by enormous majorities when the two parties and the legislative and executive branches came together.

The point of all this is that I think there is a consensus in Iowa today that we have to increase teachers' salaries. It may not be possible to do as much as we would like to do this session because of the drop in revenue, but still a consensus does exist. Therefore, given the makeup of state government today, a legislature controlled by one party, but by a very narrow margin, and an executive branch by the other party, the only way legislation will be passed is if both parties play a major role in the drafting of the school legislation and approve the final product. To try to do otherwise is at best misguided and at worst cynical. I can also tell you that there is more cynicism toward government today than there has been for a long time. That cynicism is not lessened by bickering over what the public considers intricate provisions in the proposed legislation. I do not think there is any political advantage to be gained unless you can pass a reasonable bill to increase teachers' salaries and you will not pass it unless there is a consensus among the two parties and the Governor.

I have seen the statistics showing an upcoming shortage of teachers in this state. While increased salaries are certainly the most important ingredient in attracting more young people into the field, it seems to be that other programs should be considered.

For example, rural Iowa has many highly intelligent people who are unable to travel any distance to attend college or university. They are essentially locked into their region by family matters. These people would be excellent teachers. They will not be recruited away and, they will teach in schools in their region.

The University of Northern Iowa and the Des Moines Area Community College have such a program in Carroll where DMACC teaches the first two years following UNI requirements. The second two years are taught by UNI faculty both in person and over the ICN. Of the twenty-five graduates from this program to date, twenty-three are teaching in schools in the region. The program would not require new bricks and mortar and would only involve some additional personnel. They could be taught on community college campuses throughout the state. It will only be successful, however, if both sectors work together in a cooperative fashion, do not try to make the program into a profit center and use bona fide faculty. If the college does not utilize instructors who would qualify to teach on their campus, then the programs become a farce which must be guarded against. I strongly recommend that such a program be put into effect statewide to help address our teacher shortage.

Additionally, I understand that the teacher shortage is more acute for certain subjects. Why not give school boards authority to establish pay differentials? If a board determines that they have a special need for a physics teacher, why shouldn't the board have authority to establish a salary above the level that teacher would receive under the district's salary schedule?

I also note increased discussion for school reorganization. Some schools today are clearly too small. I recommend you to the Great Plains Report which was commissioned by the Legislature in 1964. The last time I checked there was one copy remaining in the Service Bureau Library. The report looked at school districts and concluded that there was an optimum size – that districts could be too large and too small. The per pupil cost was like a bell curve. Districts that were too large or too small could be given incentives beyond what exist today, to merge. You could consider county-like districts in rural areas where several districts would be merged with one superintendent and one board but with multiple attendance centers. Thus, in a rural county with four districts predominantly within the county, they could still retain their four high schools with all the extra-curricular activities remaining in the community but sharing faculty and even facilities. There would be some savings but also some additional transportation costs. Students would have the advantage of more class offerings and better qualified instructors in some instances.

Lastly I find myself perplexed by one action or inaction of this general assembly. Some years ago you created rainy day funds. This was even discussed in antiquity when I was down here and it should have been enacted then. You showed foresight when you created these funds. What I fail to understand is your failure to utilize the funds now that there is a downturn in our economy and the state's revenue has fallen substantially below projections. While some may think this is not an emergency, it certainly seems so to me. Why else create the fund if not to use when revenue dips substantially. When the economy starts to grow again, you can start to replenish the fund.

What you must realize is that state programs can certainly be cut, but when they are, there are repercussions to some of the people. Sometimes it takes years before the total impact is understood but it does have an effect. For example cut funds to prisons and you are encouraging more overcrowding than we now have and a takeover by the federal courts. Cut school aid, and gradually the quality of our schools and the infrastructure will deteriorate. The same is true with our universities and community colleges. I understand that this is gradual but it nonetheless takes place. When we try to encourage new businesses to come to Iowa or existing businesses to expand in Iowa, they all tell me they look at our infrastructure, i.e. schools, hospitals, roads etc. Additionally, when you reduce state programs, invariably costs are shifted to the local property tax which is probably the one Iowa tax that is out of line with surrounding states. By arbitrarily putting limits on local governments beyond what now exists, you are hamstringing the government that is closest to the people. Instead of limiting local government, during the good times of the last ten or so years, you should have been shifting the cost from the property tax to state revenue such as has been done with schools.

I understand that in times such as these your job is difficult. There is a government that is divided politically. You are besieged by outsiders and press who know what you should do but who do not have a consensus among themselves. Whatever you do there will be critics who berate you. Notwithstanding all this, remember that there have been times when under such circumstances some of our best legislation has been passed and that it has stood the test of time. I certainly wish you success with the very difficult issues confronting you today.

The Memorial Choir sang "The Irish Blessing".