

To: Members of the Iowa General Assembly

**From: Senator John Jensen, Co-Chair, Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund
Representative Chuck Gipp, Co-Chair, Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund**

Re: Iowa's Civil War Battle Flags

The 24th General Assembly passed two laws in 1892 that made an enduring impact on the preservation of the state's history. The first was "An Act to promote historical collections in the capitol of the state." Starting with three rooms in the ground floor of the capitol, the curator of the collection was charged to "collect and arrange books, maps, charts, public documents, manuscripts, and other papers and materials, illustrative of the history of Iowa in particular." This was the genesis of what is today the Museum and Archives Bureau of the State Historical Society of Iowa, the historical division of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs. Three rooms in the capitol have grown to a modern museum, archives, and research facility housed in 220,000 square feet.

The second action was an act requiring "the adjutant-general and the curator of the historical collections, with the advice and consent of the executive council, shall cause the colors, standards and battle flags borne by Iowa regiments and batteries during the war of the rebellion to be placed in hermetically sealed glass cases, in such a manner as to display them to the best advantage, and to preserve them as far as possible from all injury thereto."

One hundred and five years later these flags, plus later flags from other wars, have stood in honor in the rotunda of the Capitol. In response to public concerns on the condition of the flags, the 78th General Assembly took the action in 1999 by appropriating funding from the capitol restoration funds and assigning the Department of Cultural Affairs with the responsibility of conducting a study to stabilize the battle flag collection's condition. That study was completed and funding appropriated in 2000 to begin the first steps of implementing the plan identified within the report.

Join us on February 26th, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM for a tour of the conservation lab in the lower level of the Historical Building. See for yourself the work that has begun in the effort to preserve this part of Iowa's proud heritage. You will be able to visit with Jerome Thompson, Museum Bureau Chief, and other staff as they not only begin to stabilize these fragile pieces of our history, but use today's technology to tell us more of the stories these battle flags represent.