



The War We Are In

Before I address the issue represented in the above title, will address some of the key issues that many of you expressed interest in during the session.

Property Tax Relief

Property taxes have been increasing dramatically and we have all felt it. It is a very complicated issue and much of it must be addressed at the local level as well as on the state level. The end result of our work on this was about \$100 million in property tax relief with new exemptions for seniors and veterans. If you want to dive into this more, Iowans for Tax Relief has a good overview that can be found here.

<https://mailchi.mp/taxrelief/2023-property-tax-reform>

School Choice

One of the big victories for education in the state was the establishment of Educational Savings Accounts, which families can use at some private schools. I know some people feel that tax money should not be used for private schools, but we must not forget that parents who choose private schools for their children are taxpayers too. Considering the small fraction of the public school budget that could be redirected to private school expenses, and the safeguards built into the Educational Savings Account plan, the school choice bill did a lot to bring fairness to educational funding and brought school choice to many families.

Other Educational Issues

Teacher Empowerment was another win in our public schools. We heard from very frustrated teachers who felt their hands were tied when it came to dealing with behavior issues in the classroom. House File 604 allows teachers to make complaints directly to the investigative office, provides whistle blower protection, requires an escalated discipline policy for disruptive students, and more.

Other education related legislation empowered parents by prohibiting schools from keeping secrets from parents in the event their child expresses a gender identity that is different from their birth sex. We also prohibited gender identity teaching in grades K-6, reserved school restrooms and locker rooms for the appropriate biological sex and removed sexually explicit materials from school libraries. In many school districts, these new rules will make little or no difference, they were already following these principles.

Pushing Back on the Woke Agenda

The “woke agenda” includes some of the things we have seen in our schools as mentioned above and extends into the general culture as well. We pushed back on this agenda by banning transgender surgeries and hormone therapies for children under 18 years of age. It should be a “no brainer” that such procedures should be banned for minors. It is hard to believe that it has come to this, but we have people in our society who think “trans therapy” such as puberty blockers and surgeries are appropriate for children.

These things cause irreversible physical harm, and this is a situation where government has to step in and protect the children.

The woke agenda also extends into things like DEI (Diversity Equity & Inclusion). Our Regent Universities have been spending at least \$2 million per year on salaries for DEI positions on campus. But it has become apparent that much of DEI is not diverse, equal or inclusive, but has simply been a front for silencing and excluding Christians and conservatives. Therefore, the new budget requires the Board of Regents to complete a study of their DEI programs to see if they deserve to be funded. This may seem like a weak response, but it is a first step in exposing this kind of discrimination.

A Good Session?

Most are saying this was one of the best sessions they can remember. I would agree that a lot of good things were done, and we can be happy about the progress made. There are many other good things that deserve mentioning, such as the bill increasing penalties for human trafficking, which was authored by my good friend, Representative Mark Thompson. I was happy to be a cosponsor of that bill!

But being there and “seeing how the sausage is made” makes me very aware that it could have been (should have been) much better. Many bills started out good but got watered down. Other high priority issues like life, voter integrity, medical freedom, establishing constitutional state sovereignty, protecting marriage and family, etc. did not get consideration. This is disappointing, but we will continue to push these things next year.

The War We Are In

The issues addressed in this letter point to a sobering fact: WE ARE IN A CULTURE WAR! Because this is a war, we must realize that new ink on new paper in Des Moines will not convince the opposition to sit down and give up. They will do all they can to go around, reinterpret, or simply ignore the good laws we pass. We must stay on the offensive and we must stay vigilant.

As a culture, we are just beginning to wake up to the reality of this war, not to mention how to strategically engage in battle. One of the most important strategies is to restore the moral foundation of our nation which has been seriously undermined. As a result, this house we call America is teetering on the edge of collapse.

James McHenry, a signer of the Constitution said:

“The Holy Scriptures...can alone secure to society, order and peace, and to our courts of justice and constitutions of government, purity, stability, and usefulness. In vain, without the Bible, we increase ... laws.”

The faith of our founders shaped the solid foundation upon which our nation was built, and that foundation must be restored. “Separation of Church and State”, as we have been led to think of it, is a lie of grand proportions. Nothing in our founding documents implies that Christian voices and values should be kept out of our government. In fact, they imply just the opposite.

Moral neutrality is a myth, someone’s value system will shape public policy. The battle is over which one. I do not advocate any kind of forced faith because to be genuine, Christian faith must be voluntary and from the heart. But censoring Christians and Christian values under the guise of things like Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion must not be permitted.

Charles Carroll, a signer of the Declaration, wrote:

“Without morals a republic cannot subsist any length of time; they therefore who are decrying the Christian religion whose morality is so sublime and pure...are undermining the solid foundation of morals, the best security for the duration of free governments.”

Liberty is based on a concept called self-government, which comes from having the Law of God written internally in our hearts through submission to God. Such internal government is required to reduce excessive external government. This is the only true fix for reducing the size and reach of government and restoring our decaying foundations, it is the only true recipe for liberty.

It has been my honor to serve in the Iowa House and I am looking forward to the next session.

Best Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brad Sherman', written in a cursive style.

Brad Sherman