

The Schultz Perspective

by Senator Jason Schultz

One of the most heart-breaking items the Iowa Legislature tackles is human trafficking. Human trafficking is already illegal; both labor and sex trafficking. Rather, what makes it difficult is the range of powerful emotions related to this gross injustice done to the individual, and how it weakens the very society in which it operates.

Years ago, I chose to listen to law enforcement professionals from across the state in evaluating new legislation that would strengthen Iowa's part in combating trafficking in general. I've been happy to report that for the last several years your senators and representatives have voted together, almost always unanimously, regarding law enforcement in this area.

You may have heard about HF 2565, the Human Trafficking Task Force bill. Due to the strong emotion evoked, the push to "do something!" has become overwhelming. HF 2565 is the House of Representatives' answer to that demand. If the State of Iowa was not already doing something to combat trafficking, this would be an easy step to take.

As it relates to the Department of Public Safety (DPS), the Department has two full time Special Agents whose full-time job is to follow up leads offered by the public. Last year there were 121 tips turned in. Most of their focus is responding to local law enforcement's requests for assistance in investigations and state resources. There is no delay in providing the assistance. Overseeing trafficking enforcement is a statewide task force of 22 law enforcement agencies sharing strategies and intelligence gathered from investigations. A total of 7 more agencies are looking to join, and any peace officer in the state of Iowa is eligible and has the authority to investigate human trafficking. This is already in Iowa law. Iowa Code section 80.45 establishes the Office to Combat Human Trafficking (OCHT) in the Iowa Department of Public Safety.

The Office to Combat Human Trafficking shall:

- Serve as a point of contact for activities designed to combat human trafficking
- Consult with relevant stakeholders in an effort to combat human trafficking
- Develop strategies to collect criminal history data about human trafficking
- Develop strategies for information-sharing among government agencies
- Apply for or assist other government agencies in seeking relevant grants
- Research and recommend training to assist other government agencies

HF 2595 would expand Iowa's efforts to a task force of 20 new positions at DPS focused full time on human trafficking. This would include a new director, assistant director, intelligence officer, cyber-crime investigator, 8 investiga-

tors, 4 victim advocates, and 4 emergency dispatchers. These positions would be evenly distributed in four quadrants within Iowa, divided by Interstates 35 and 80. The rest of the bill sets up a new division to focus only on trafficking in the Attorney General's office with four Assistant Attorneys General. It also requires the State Auditor to assign another four Assistant Attorneys General to focus only on trafficking. In addition, the task force can utilize State Auditor personnel for investigations without the usual public notifications of an audit.

The bill has a large fiscal impact. The Legislative Services Agency estimates that the first year of the Task Force would require \$4.8 million for start-up equipment, personnel, and \$3.5 million in ongoing annual expenses. In this lean fiscal environment, every new spending idea is scrutinized. We're measuring how we do something currently versus the cost and estimated return of a new idea – in this case a new task force.

The biggest problem of all is filling the positions. Finding enough certified officers to fulfill HF 2565 would be difficult. DPS already has 14 vacancies in their criminal investigation unit, and the State Patrol has 48 vacancies. It is predicted that there will be around 200 retirements coming in the next several years. The number of applicants has declined sharply, and the training academy is turning out trained state troopers, but the numbers don't match retirements.

I wrote earlier that I seek guidance from law enforcement professionals in evaluating human trafficking bills. This bill didn't come from a request from law enforcement. As it relates to DPS, it seems the same work is being done with the current personnel and



equipment they have now, with the equipment being deployed as needed. When not needed, the people and equipment are being used on other ongoing investigations and operations in other areas of concern.

Requiring positions within the department by law would result in less flexibility and higher personnel needs. Relatedly, there is a specialized unit working specifically in child exploitation, the Internet Crimes Against Children Division, but not actual trafficking. In comparison to the 121 tips received by the public, this group received 10,462 tips and leads on issues such as child pornography and child sexual assault. I would be disappointed to learn that due to a new law, officers working on 10,462 points of data would have to be transferred to a task force currently receiving, on average, 121 tips. The DPS makes arrests and investigates every serious crime such as murder, rape, kidnapping, human trafficking, and child exploitation. We must let the DPS allocate personnel and resources as they see fit given the confidential information received.

Protecting American Farmland for the Next Generation

by Congressman Randy Feenstra

In Iowa, we recognize that our rich soil is one of our most precious resources, making our farmland the envy of the world. In drafting the Farm Bill in the House Agriculture Committee, it was critical to make protecting our food supply, rural communities, and national security one of its central pillars. We have seen how a previous lack of oversight of foreign ownership of agricultural land has created vulnerabilities that we simply cannot ignore.

That's why I introduced the Foreign Agricultural Restrictions to Maintain Local Agriculture and National Defense (FARMLAND) Act and am pleased that this legislation is now included in the Farm Bill, which passed out of the House Agriculture Committee. This commonsense proposal takes meaningful steps to ensure that American farmland stays in the hands of American farmers for the next generation.

The FARMLAND Act strengthens oversight by authorizing the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) to review and monitor foreign purchases or leases that exceed \$5 million or 320 acres. It also requires the Secretaries of Agriculture and Homeland Security to issue an annual report identifying any national security risks tied to foreign investment in U.S.

farmland. Just as importantly, it directs the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to create a public database, so Americans know exactly who owns our agricultural land. This transparency will ensure we have the confidence to know exactly who owns our agricultural land and where foreign investments are being concentrated, such as around U.S. military facilities. This improves accountability while ensuring that potential risks are identified and addressed early.

President Trump has already taken action to implement some of the needed reforms that the FARMLAND Act champions, and we are beginning to see results. The USDA has started to streamline and modernize reporting through a new online portal under the Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act. Passing the FARMLAND Act into law is essential, as it will codify and strengthen these efforts to permanently ensure accountability.

These reforms come at an essential time. Nearly half of all U.S. farmland is expected to change hands in the next two decades. Without these proper safeguards, foreign adversaries like China could gain a foothold in our agricultural sector, putting unnecessary pressure on Iowa farmers who

The Alons Archive

by Senator Kevin Alons

As we move closer to the end of session, the focus of our work shifts from committee rooms to debate and votes on the Senate floor. This week, we passed a number of important bills, and I'd like to highlight a few key pieces of legislation.

Protecting Iowa Producers and Businesses

This week, the Senate advanced legislation to provide clarity and fairness in how greenhouse gas emissions are treated under the law. Senate File 2427 ensures that Iowa farmers, ethanol producers, and other job creators are not subjected to speculative lawsuits over alleged climate impacts.

The bill sets a clear standard: liability may only be imposed if there is clear and convincing evidence that a specific state or federal law has been violated. This approach protects responsible actors who are operating within the law, while still holding bad actors accountable. Just as importantly, the bill does not create any new cause of action, preventing an expansion of litigation that could harm Iowa's agricultural and energy sectors.

Supporting Iowa's Trucking and Agriculture Economy

The Senate also considered House Concurrent Resolution 6 which urges Congress to modernize federal trucking weight limits. Current federal law caps interstate truck weights at 80,000 pounds, even though Iowa already allows heavier loads up to 96,000 pounds, with additional axles, on many non-interstate highways.

Aligning federal law with what already works in Iowa would improve efficiency, reduce the number of trucks on the road, and support our farmers, manufacturers, and supply chains. It would also



eliminate inconsistencies that drivers face when traveling across state lines.

Expanding Safe Access to Dental Care

On Monday, I had the honor of floor managing House File 648 which improves access to dental care by allowing qualified dentists to host licensed sedation providers in their practices. This ensures that patients undergoing more complex procedures can safely receive moderate sedation in an outpatient setting.

The bill establishes strict training, certification, and facility requirements, ensuring that patient safety remains the top priority while expanding access to care across the state.

Clarifying Window Tint Standards

The Senate also voted this week to update Iowa's window tint standards. House File 766 provides clearer and more consistent standards for vehicle window tinting. Rather than relying solely on administrative rules, the bill places specific transparency thresholds directly into law at 70% for windshields and 50% for front side windows.

By clearly defining these standards, the bill improves enforceability while maintaining visibility and safety for both drivers and law enforcement.

Confirming Qualified Leaders in State Government

With the second funnel behind us, the legislature's focus begins to shift toward the state budget. Another critical responsibility of the Senate during this time is reviewing and confirming the governor's appointees.

These individuals serve in key roles that help shape state policy and oversee important agencies. I take this responsibility seriously and carefully evaluate each nominee to ensure they are qualified, capable, and committed to serving all Iowans with integrity.

Let Me Hear from You

As always, I value hearing directly from you. Your insight and perspective guide my work at the Capitol and help ensure that legislation reflects our shared values.

If you have a concern, a suggestion, or simply want to share your thoughts, please reach out to my office. Together, we can continue working toward an Iowa that is strong, prosperous, and rooted in common sense.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Warm regards,
Senator Kevin Alons
Iowa State Senate, District 7

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