

## Significance of Work

Not since 1882 had the Iowa legislature discharged its responsibilities in so little time as in 1972. Exactly 90 years ago, when it met every even-numbered year in biennial sessions, the 19th General Assembly had conducted its business in 68 days. The 1972 legislature needed 75 days. But even that was something of a miracle in the Twentieth Century.

Republican majority leaders had promised in the beginning that the 1972 session would be a short one—and for good reason:

For one thing, it was an election year and they were well aware that, once the balmy breezes of spring began to waft their way over a fresh-blooming countryside, it would be difficult for those members planning reelection campaigns to keep their minds on legislative business. For another, they wanted to prove to annual-session skeptics that short sessions were possible.

Help toward their goal, help they had not counted on, came from another quarter—the Iowa Supreme Court. In one sense it may have been help they did not want or appreciate. But they got it all the same. For, on January 14, four days after the session opened, the court held, in a 9 to 0 decision,



that the apportionment plan adopted by the 1971 legislature was unconstitutional. The court said it did not comply with state and federal guidelines calling for creation of compact districts on a one-man, one-vote basis; that it placed greater emphasis on saving the seats of incumbent legislators, to guarantee that it was adopted, than in making certain that every citizen's vote carried equal weight.

Then, acting on the authority granted in the apportionment amendment ratified by the people in 1968, the court literally shocked the legislature by announcing it would take over the job of drawing a constitutional plan, rather than give that body a second go at it. The amendment makes it mandatory for the court, whenever it holds a legislative apportionment plan unconstitutional, to "adopt or cause to be adopted," within 90 days, a plan that does comply with the constitution.

In its decision the court also held that all 50 senate seats would be up for election in 1972, thereby cutting short the last two years of the terms of 27 senators, which originally were not to expire until 1975. This authority, too, was granted in the 1968 apportionment amendment.

What this meant was that, for the first time since the election of the 1st General Assembly in 1846, all of the legislature's seats would be up for election at the same time. It also meant that the court's plan had to be completed by April 13—90 days after its decision of January 14.



With all of this looming ahead, legislative leaders redoubled their efforts to keep the session short—even in the face of this cautionary counsel from Governor Ray, promptly amplified by Democratic minority leaders: Do not push so hard to keep the session short that important items crying out for attention do not get it.

That was the picture, then, with the legislature less than a week old. In only 10 more weeks it was over. So what kind of a session was it? Did it really accomplish much in 75 days? One way to judge public reaction is through editorial comment carried by the various media, which seldom see eye-to-eye on everything. A sampling indicated this to be true in appraising the legislature's performance. Some called the session highly productive, or credible. Some thought it was unnecessary. The *Waterloo Daily Courier* even called for a return to biennial sessions:

"Without overlooking the accomplishments of the 1972 session," said the *Courier*, "one can still wonder if annual sessions are really necessary. It would make more sense to reinstate biennial sessions and allow the legislature to call itself back into session if important business needs to be conducted."

But the *Ottumwa Daily Courier* put in a plug for annual sessions, saying:

The much-maligned Iowa legislature has adjourned its 1972 session with a pretty good score card. There is reason to be disappointed in some of the actions it failed to



take—but that much is par for the course. . . All in all, it was a good session. Adjournment in 75 days supports the contention that annual sessions can be more efficient.

The WMT Stations in Cedar Rapids thought the 1972 session could become a model for the future, commenting:

. . . (it) . . . was a short and reasonably productive session . . . (but) . . . to our way of thinking the biggest shortcoming of the 1972 Assembly was its complete failure to meet the issue of tax exemptions . . . The Assembly proved it can pass some important legislation in a short, business-like session. In that respect, we see no reason why 1972 should not become a model for future sessions as the legislature tackles some of the knottier remaining problems such as property tax exemptions.

The *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, apparently satisfied with annual sessions, suggested ways to improve them:

A concentration upon fiscal matters in the first session of a General Assembly and upon non-fiscal matters in the second could develop into a sound pattern of operations. . . Election-year sessions, if productive, can be effective arguments during the forthcoming campaign. That "it's good politics to provide good government" is an adage even more telling in this age of better educated, more perceptive voters.

#### Other comments:

The 1972 session . . . was short, as promised, and productive, as hoped. . . On the whole, legislation was constructive and spending kept within bounds obviously wanted by the Iowa taxpayers.—*Mason City Globe-Gazette*.



... considering the partisan tensions and weight of crucial decision, the second half of the 64th General Assembly scored good points in a number of important areas. Left hanging, unfortunately, were bills to allow wine sales in grocery stores, collective bargaining for public employees, and formation of health maintenance organizations... With the governor and lieutenant governor sparring politically for primary election advantages, and with a record number of legislators seeking other offices, the concluded session deserves kudos for progress under intense pressure and many distractions.—*The Sioux City Journal*.

... for once, we believe the members of both houses should be commended for tending to business and grinding out most of the priority legislation. They did it in less than three months, in spite of predictions from legislative pessimists that they would be in Des Moines until summer.—KWWL Stations, Waterloo.

The second session of the 64th Iowa General Assembly will go down as the shortest legislative session since the 1882 legislature called it quits on St. Patrick's day... though some urgent matters were shunted aside for lack of time, the legislature chalked up a creditable list of accomplishments.—*The Des Moines Register*.

Considering all the obstacles it had to clear... the 1972 legislature came out with an above average grade... it was held to 75 days... and a majority of the goals set by the governor and the legislative leaders came into reality. When it is taken into account that some of the most important legislation in the decade was among those goals, the record glows even brighter... All things considered, it was a highly productive session.—*The Cedar Rapids Gazette*.

In retrospect, we think most Iowans will have to agree that the second session of the 64th General Assembly, de-



spite some bitter in-fighting, produced more pluses than minuses. . . Perhaps one of the reasons the legislature hung up a good record . . . was that it was one of the shortest on record.—Davenport *Times-Democrat*.

The *Marshalltown Times-Republican* said that despite the "often expressed fear" that sparring between Governor Ray and Lieutenant Governor Jepsen would disrupt the session, "there was no more political bickering than usual."

"Ray and Jepsen did tangle on the drinking rights issue," the *Times-Republican* said, "and while Jepsen won that skirmish, it is doubtful that either gained any appreciable political advantage. On the whole, Ray may have fared better than Jepsen, for it was he, not the presiding officer of the Senate, who exerted the leadership that got things done."

"We've thrust our share of brickbats at the just-ended session of the Iowa legislature," said the KCRG Stations in Cedar Rapids. "Now that the session is over, and we can assess its accomplishments, we feel some bouquets are also in order. Three bills passed by the General Assembly stand out as laws that will have a lasting impact on the state and its people. We refer to the court reform bill . . . the home rule bill . . . and the bill giving majority rights to 19-year-olds."

The *Kossuth County Advance* in Algona said the session was kept short by anxiety among legislators over the effect of the Supreme Court's reap-



portionment plan and the desire to begin campaigns.

"Many observers felt it (the session) would have continued for some time if the court threat had not existed... With the excessive work on appropriations eliminated from the session work could be done and on the whole the session was considered a success."

In the final analysis, there seemed to be the normal wide range of views among the people themselves about the performance of the 1972 legislature. But, and perhaps more importantly, there seemed to be general agreement that this legislature proved it is possible to have a short session and that it will deserve the credit for having cut the cloth if this becomes the pattern followed in the future.

*TOTAL COST, 64th GENERAL ASSEMBLY*

<i>Item</i>	<i>House</i>	<i>Senate</i>	<i>Joint</i>	<i>Total</i>
Salaries .....	\$1,703,406.75	\$ 945,968.94	\$126,684.55	\$2,776,060.24
Chaplains .....			6,274.90	6,274.90
Printing .....			498,399.73	498,399.73
*Travel, Exp. ..	306,414.80	156,805.50		463,220.30
Misc. ....	50,862.50	46,116.91	43,395.46	140,374.87
Totals .....	\$2,060,684.05	\$1,148,891.35	\$674,754.64	\$3,884,330.04

*TOTAL COST OF LAST FOUR BIENNIAL SESSIONS  
and of FIRST ANNUAL SESSION (63rd G.A.)*

<i>63rd G.A.</i>	<i>62nd G.A.</i>	<i>61st G.A.</i>	<i>60th G.A.</i>	<i>59th G.A.</i>
\$3,260,824.59	\$2,311,097.28	\$1,608,894.56	\$1,190,485.30	\$1,153,226.66

\* This item represents mileage for one round trip weekly for each legislator between home and Statehouse, plus daily expenses while in session. These were authorized for the first time beginning January 1, 1971. Previously, nothing was authorized for expenses and each legislator was paid for one round trip per session.