

Major Legislation

Every two years the legislature meets and has 100 days in which to conduct its business. It is the rule, rather than the exception, however, for a session to run beyond the deadline. That was the case with the 56th General Assembly which lasted longer than most.

The deadline for the 56th General Assembly was April 19 but for the official record the session lasted 110 days, starting January 10 and winding up April 29. Unofficially, however, the final gavel did not fall until 2:16 P. M. May 4, when routine enrolling and signing of bills to be sent to the Governor was completed. Lawmaking stopped on April 30, but four additional days were necessary for the cleanup work so only a skeleton crew was on hand for *sine die* adjournment. Actually, each house was in session 77 working days. The difference was counted in Saturdays, Sundays, Easter holiday, and spring recess.

During the session 1,050 bills were introduced, compared to 971 in 1953 and 1,163 in 1951. The House originated 592, the Senate 458. A total of 325 bills was passed and signed into law by Governor Hoegh. The House originated the only bill vetoed by the Governor as well as 206 of those he

signed. The Senate originated the other 119 that won his approval.

In addition to bills, 84 resolutions of various kinds (joint, concurrent, and one-house) were introduced. Only joint resolutions required the Governor's signature, and he affixed it to the six presented to him. The remaining 24 never reached him. The legislature passed 49 of the 62 concurrent resolutions introduced, while the House adopted 12 of its own 13 one-house resolutions and the Senate seven of its nine.

In addition, the Senate passed 42 bills that failed to win House approval, while 56 House-approved measures died for want of Senate action. Sixty-five Senate and 50 House bills were lost through having been postponed "indefinitely," rejected, withdrawn, tabled or defeated. One Senate and three House joint resolutions met similar fates. Twenty-seven House bills were substituted for companion Senate bills and 32 Senate bills were substituted for companion House bills in the legislative process. All others died in committees for want of support.

The lone measure vetoed by Governor Hoegh had been adopted in almost record time. With adjournment looming dead ahead, the proposal to permit the sale of non-fat dry milk solids as simply non-fat dry milk was whipped through the legislature within an hour after being introduced. In vetoing the bill after adjournment the Governor

said, in part, in a letter sent to the Secretary of State for safekeeping:

I have carefully considered the merits and the disadvantages of this measure, and I have held numerous conferences with persons representing opposing views. It is my considered opinion that this bill, if enacted into law, would have unfortunate consequences, both to the Iowa milk producer and to the consumer.

It is essential that there be no misleading or confusing labeling of our food products. The product covered by this bill is a reconstituted milk or milk derivative, not a true natural milk, and the elimination of the word "solids" from the definition would in my opinion lead easily to the confusion which we are seeking to avoid. It should also be noted that our *present* definition of the product under discussion is in accord with the Federal standards, and that there appears to be little or no possibility that these standards will be changed by the present Congress. For these reasons, I am vetoing this measure, being firmly convinced that such action is in the best interests of the people of Iowa.

Although much major legislation was passed, none attracted the widespread attention given the "pocketbook" bills, that is, the tax increase proposals which hit John Q. Public where it hurt. Most interest centered on the sales tax measure, which wound up in conference committee. In final form the bill called for increasing the tax from 2 to $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ for two years beginning July 1, 1955. New cars and trailers, and new car accessories, were exempted from the $\frac{1}{2}\%$ increase though still subject to the original 2% tax. Moreover, the

sales tax was extended to beer, bowling, and cigarettes for the first time in Iowa.

Other increases included upping the income tax gradually from \$7.50 to \$8 on the first \$1,000 of taxable income until the fourth thousand when it was to go from \$37.50 to \$40 per additional thousand, and cutting income tax deductions from \$15 to \$12 for single persons and \$30 to \$24 for married couples (a raise in reverse) while increasing the deduction for each dependent from \$7.50 to \$12 to help larger families. The corporation income tax also was raised from two to three per cent.

The legislature also approved a new tax on capital gains, added a sixth cent-per-gallon to the gasoline tax for two years beginning July 1, 1955, extended the fifth cent for another two years (beginning July 1, 1955), and adopted a reciprocal tax providing that out-of-state insurance companies would have to pay the same premium tax for doing business in Iowa as Iowa companies are charged for doing business in the states where their home offices are located. Previously, a two per cent premium tax applied to all companies.

The new taxes were levied on "an emergency basis" pending the report of the special tax committee created by the legislature to study the state's overall tax structure. It was estimated that new and increased taxes would raise \$22,000,000 a year in new revenue to offset the deficit, and to

provide for the following increased appropriations:

\$5,500,000 a year (about double the amount previously available) to pay agricultural land tax credits in full.

\$4,000,000 a year in state aid to schools.

\$2,282,520 a year for Board of Control institutions.

\$2,024,085 a year for Board of Education institutions.

\$1,316,663 a year for administrative departments.

The tax laws were almost certain to be an issue in the 1956 campaign, but they were not the only controversial bills adopted. The law providing that all eggs must be graded caused hot debate and was challenged in the courts within two months after its adoption. The passage of the "cap pistol" law permitting the sale of these toy "weapons" inspired a request for an Attorney General's opinion prior to its taking effect. The law exempting private clubs, hotels, and railroad club cars from the law forbidding the keeping of liquor where beer is sold also reached the courts.

These new laws attracted marked attention, while much major legislation went almost unnoticed except by interested groups or individuals. On the agricultural front there was the new law establishing 100 extension councils (two in Pottawattamie County, one in each of the other 98

counties) and requiring counties to levy up to a one-half mill property tax to support extension activities and educational programs separate from the Farm Bureau.

On the appropriations front there were the laws setting aside the funds needed to operate all divisions of state government and for capital improvements for the 1955-57 biennium. For operational purposes the legislature appropriated approximately \$138,000,000 a year not including highway funds. The legislature also voted:

To permit cities and towns to publish municipal ordinances in a complete code every 10 years instead of every 20.

To permit salary increases up to \$1,800 a year for mayors and councilmen in commission-form cities.

To permit voters in cities and towns to authorize by election a one-eighth mill tax levy to subsidize public transportation facilities.

To authorize municipalities to operate city transit systems acquired by purchase, gift, or condemnation.

To remove the 60,000 minimum population requirement for establishment of county zoning commissions.

To repeal the 100-year-old Sunday "blue laws."

To establish a Supreme Court statistician.

To give employees who do not have three free hours to vote on general election day enough time off with pay to provide three hours for voting.

To authorize county-wide permanent registration of voters at the option of supervisors.

To substitute the term "funeral director" for "undertaker" in all sections of the law still containing the old term.

To enable a person to will all or any part of his body to an institution for scientific or rehabilitation use.

To give the Highway Commission, and cities and towns, power to regulate the use of access roads to viaducts and to "through" highways.

To create an authority to construct a toll road with revenue bonds if and when a toll road in any adjoining state reaches the Iowa border.

To extend the tenure of the office of the Senate president pro tempore to the first day of the next regular session after he was elected.

To give Korean War veterans \$500 property tax exemption.

To bring Korean veterans under the soldiers' preference act and under civil service.

To submit to voters on November 8, 1956, the question of whether to issue \$26,000,000 in bonds to pay Korean War veterans a bonus of \$10 a month for domestic service and \$12.50 a month for foreign service.

To increase salaries of county elective officials.

To change the name of the State Board of Education to the State Board of Regents.

To increase maximum unemployment compensation weekly benefits from \$26 for 30 weeks to \$30 for 34 weeks.

To lower minimum requirements for payment of unemployment compensation tax from employers of eight or more to employers of four or more.

To authorize appointment of a legislative research director by a council composed of three Senators and three Representatives.

To require the Board of Parole to interview life sentence prisoners after they have served 15 years and every three years thereafter, and to make recommendations for commutation of sentences to the Governor.

To create a special tax study committee.

To set the deadline for filing state income tax blanks at April 30 instead of March 31.

To make mandatory the use of the "adjusted gross income" figure from federal income tax returns as the starting point for figuring income tax due the state and to simplify and shorten the state income tax blank.

This review does not begin to cover all of the important legislation enacted nor the work done on measures not adopted. It does not even attempt to discuss the bills that added a bit of humor to the session, such as one providing that a jar of pickles must contain more ounces of pickles than pickle juice. But it does give some idea of the tremendous legislative work load and of the increasing magnitude of the task faced by legislators in attempting to pass laws that will keep pace with the many complexities of modern day living.

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