



STATEHOUSE NEWS

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Stronger Sex Offender Law Signed by Governor

With overwhelming support from law enforcement officials, Governor Culver signed Senate File 340, which rewrites Iowa's sex offender registry laws. Attorney General Tom Miller and Commissioner Gene Meyer, from the Department of Public Safety, joined the Governor in applauding the bipartisan work by legislators to strengthen Iowa's sex offender laws and address new federal requirements.



In 2006, the federal government passed new federal requirements in the Adam Walsh Act to strengthen penalties for crimes against children and standardize sex offender registries across the country.

Under Senate File 340, which goes into effect July 1, 2009, county sheriffs will collect more information from all sex offenders so that it is easier to keep track of them. Sex offenders who commit an offense against a minor will be required to obey new exclusionary zones and employment restrictions.

These offenders will not be able to loiter

within 300 feet of a public or nonpublic elementary or secondary school, child care facility, or any place intended primarily for use by minors, such as playgrounds and recreational areas.

Offenders who commit an offense against a

minor will not be able to work or volunteer at any school or child care facility, at any children's arcade, or facilities that provide programs or services intended primarily for minors.

No sex offender will be able to work at a facility that supplies services to dependant adults.

The bill also takes all of the current crimes that define a sex offender and classifies them into one of three tiers. These tiers are used to determine how often the offender must go into the county sheriff's office to update their information on the sex offender registry website.

Those in the lowest tier, tier 1, will go in once a year. Tier 2 goes in every 6 months. Those in the highest tier, tier 3, which includes offenses against minors, must go in every three months.

2002 Legislation

In 2002, the Legislature passed a law which stated that all persons on Iowa's sex offender registry could not reside within 2,000 feet of a public or nonpublic elementary or secondary school or a child care facility. Reside was defined as where that person sleeps.

This law, according to law enforcement and county attorneys, only keeps offenders from sleeping near schools and child care facilities; it doesn't keep the offenders from hanging around the schools and child care facilities during the daylight hours. Law enforcement officials also stated that it is too broad and difficult to enforce because it paints everyone with the same brush.

Senate File 340 will allow law enforcement officials to better track the most dangerous sex offenders.

Inside this issue:

<i>Google "Plugs In" New Data Center</i>	2
<i>Mortgage Assistance for Disaster Victims Extended</i>	2
<i>Health Care for All Kids</i>	3
<i>Disaster Recovery, Job Creation Initiative Becomes Law</i>	3
<i>Communities Commemorating Tornadoes and Flooding</i>	4
<i>Veterans Bills Signed into Law</i>	4
<i>Governor Signs Disaster Related Bills</i>	5
<i>Summer Youth and Green Corps Become Law</i>	6
<i>Values Fund to Assist Flood Damaged Business</i>	6
<i>Main Street Communities Announced</i>	7
<i>Memorial Day Weekend Deadliest for Vehicle Accidents</i>	7
<i>Diesel Engine Exhaust Reduction Grants Available</i>	8
<i>New Ban on Winter Manure Application</i>	8
<i>CAT Awards to Coralville and Grinnell</i>	8
<i>Gas Prices Surpass \$2/ gallon Statewide</i>	9

Google “Plugs In” New Data Center

Internet giant Google recently held a “ribbon cutting” ceremony in Council Bluffs that was not a normal ribbon cutting. The Governor, local State Representatives and local officials supplanted the ribbon cutting by participating in a symbolic “plugging in the network” ceremony.

The \$600 million data center is expected to employ 200 people, with an average salary of \$50,000. It will house Google services such as a search engine, Gmail and Google maps.

“I think this is just the beginning,” Governor Culver said. “This is going to send a really strong signal to other companies that Iowa is a great place to do business.”



Microsoft plans to build a \$500 million data center in West Des Moines, and Dubuque will be the future site of IBM’s new service center, creating 1,300 jobs.

Culver said he wants Iowa to become a national leader in the information technology industry, kind of a Silicon Valley of the Midwest, and he wants to send a message to the next generation of Iowans that Iowa has good paying jobs.

Data Center Bill Signed

The Governor has also signed Senate File 478 into law to attract smaller data centers to Iowa. The bill provides property and sales tax exemptions for certain machinery

and equipment for data centers that locate in Iowa with a graduated scale of incentives based on the relative size of the investment a business makes in the state.

Currently, there are 11 projects interested in Iowa. Those projects could bring a \$1 billion investment to Iowa and create over 300 jobs. The Department of Economic Development knows of no other state that offers such incentives for data centers. Rural Iowa cities that have invested in fiber optic networks, combined with these incentives, could be inviting to these international companies.

Mortgage Assistance for Disaster Victims Extended

The mortgage assistance program for homeowners currently receiving help through the Jumpstart Iowa Housing Program has been extended for another six months. The original program provided mortgage assistance for twelve months.

The program, started in September, was designed to help Iowans affected by last summer’s floods. If their principal residence was on a list of properties to be considered for a buy-out program, they could receive up to \$1,000 a month to help pay mortgage expenses. The program was created to take away the burden of two mortgages. The goal was to leave the homeowner with only one mortgage to pay – the mortgage on a new home.

This month, the Iowa Finance Authority (IFA) Board of Directors agreed to the six-month extension. It has become clear that the buyout program is moving slower than hoped. The Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division (HSEMD), which oversees the program, indicated that some buyout proposals approved by the local community and by HSEMD in January are just now receiving approval from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) offices in Washington, D.C. As a result, homeowners are still waiting for payments on their disaster destroyed homes.

Homeowners currently receiving Interim Mortgage Assistance should contact the local Council of Govern-

ment or Entitlement City in which they applied for the Jumpstart Housing Program. For additional information, contact the Rebuild Iowa Office at (515) 242-5004.

Buyouts Moving Ahead

Although the process has moved slowly, the Rebuild Iowa Office reported that over \$22 million has been approved for the buyout program, officially known as the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. The money is used by local communities to purchase property damaged by the floods and located in the flood plain. This total is up from \$5.1 million just a few weeks ago.

Health Care for All Kids

Building upon the work of last year's health care reform legislation, Iowa has taken another step to make sure all Iowa kids have access to health care by 2011.

Prior to the 2008 session, there were roughly 45,000 uninsured kids in Iowa. With the passage of last year's health care reform bill, and Senate File 389 approved this year, about 30,000 of those uninsured kids will get health insurance.

Senate File 389 requires the Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide coverage through Medicaid or Health and Well Kids in Iowa (*hawk-i*) to all eligible children. In addition, DHS is to increase access and retention to maximize the matching federal dollars.

With Congress passing the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009, Iowa is able to receive bonuses if performance increases in *hawk-i*.



Adult Children

Currently, an adult child up to age 25, who is a non-married resident of Iowa, is eligible for continuing on their parents insurance. Senate File 389 eliminates the continuous coverage requirement. This allows a child to come back on to their parents insurance if all other requirements are met.

If a child is a full time student at a post secondary institution in Iowa, the child can stay on until past the age of 25 as long as the other eligibility requirements are met. This provision only applies to state regulated plans starting on or after July 1, 2009.

In addition, the bill states that the value of the health insurance for the adult child, which has been considered a gift for tax purposes, is not subject to state income tax. This provision applies retroactively to January 1, 2009, for tax years beginning on or after that date.

Workforce Initiatives

A health care workforce support initiative and a health care workforce fund are established under the

control of the College Student Aid Commission and the Iowa Department of Public Health. The initiative and fund are to support the following workforce shortage areas:

- Medical Residency Training
- Health Care Professionals
- Nurse Educators
- Nursing Faculty
- Registered Nurses
- Mental Health Physician Assistant

Health Care Coverage Commission

A nine member legislative health care coverage commission is created under the authority of the Legislative Council. The commission includes legislators and certain state agency directors.

The commission is required to develop a health care reform strategic plan to find Iowans who still are not receiving the proper healthcare, and develop long-term plans to provide access to affordable health care to the uninsured. The first progress report is due by January 1, 2010.

Disaster Recovery, Job Creation Initiative Becomes Law

Governor Chet Culver signed into law his signature economic development and disaster recovery plan, I-JOBS, during several ceremonies across the state. The Legislature provided pieces of the initiative in five separate bills.

"While many communities are hard at work rebuilding from last year's historic natural disasters, we must also face the challenges of the worst national economic recession since the Great Depression," said Governor Culver. "Iowans cannot and will not wait for these challenges to fix

themselves. That is why I proposed the I-JOBS Initiative to not only rebuild our communities, but create good paying jobs all across our state."

In Marshalltown, the Governor signed Senate Files 376 and 477, which direct the state to issue \$650 million in bonds to be used to pay for infrastructure needs statewide, including \$165 million for disaster rebuilding and \$50 million for bridge safety.

In Iowa City, the Governor signed Senate File 474, which directs the Regents to issue \$100 mil-

lion in bonds to be used for disaster recovery efforts at the University of Iowa. An additional \$15 million will go towards a new animal teaching hospital at Iowa State University.

In Des Moines, the Governor signed the final pieces of I-JOBS, House Files 822 and 820, which direct \$65 million for local road projects and other transportation needs, such as airports, rail, and recreational trails.

The State Treasurer's office said the bonds will be issued in mid-June. The debt is paid for by

state gaming revenues and does not require a tax increase to repay the bonds.

Included in the \$830 million I-JOBS initiative is:

- \$185 million for ready-to-go capital improvements.
- \$118.5 million for local disaster rebuilding and prevention infrastructure projects.
- \$115 million for vertical infrastructure projects.
- \$100 million for disaster recovery efforts at the University of Iowa.
- \$65 million for local road projects and airports, rail, and recreational trails.
- \$55 million for sewer upgrade and water improvement projects.
- \$50 million for bridge improvements.
- \$46.5 million for targeted disaster recovery projects.
- \$35 million for housing projects.
- \$25 million for watershed and soil conservation improvements.
- \$25 million for broadband to unserved and underserved areas of the state.
- \$10 million for renewable and alternative energy projects.

Communities Commemorating Tornadoes and Flooding

It is not the kind of event a community wants to have, but a number of cities are planning events to commemorate the 2008 weather related disasters. Over the Memorial Day weekend, both Parkersburg and New Hartford marked the one-year anniversary of the May 25 tornadoes that devastated their communities.

On May 30, Waterloo is holding an event called "Together We Weathered the Storm." At 11:00, an Iowa National Guard helicopter will land at Lafayette Park and a community picnic will follow from noon to 4 p.m. Lt. Gen Ron Dardis, head of the Rebuild Iowa Office, will speak around noon.

On June 10, 2008, half of downtown Waterloo, and many residential areas, were flooded when the Cedar River went over its banks. The commemoration is being held to coincide with *My Waterloo Days*.

In Palo, on May 30, the Palo Fund Inc. is looking for volunteers to help deliver plants to households.

Other events include:

Vinton – June 6, the feature-length video "24.7; The Vinton Area Flood of 2008," will premiere at 2 p.m. at the Palace Theater.

Mason City - June 7, Noon - 4:00 p.m. – "River City Rises, Recovers & Remembers" Community Picnic at East Park

Cedar Rapids - June 11 through June 13, including Floodstock Concert Event in Green Square Park

Oakville - June 12, 6 p.m. - Volunteer Appreciation Supper

Waverly - June 13, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. -Community picnic and playground dedication

The Rebuild Iowa Office is maintaining a list of upcoming events. The events can be found at

www.rio.iowa.gov/commemorations/index.html

Veterans Bills Signed into Law

This week, Governor Culver signed four pieces of Legislation that will maintain the state's support for service members and veterans.

Definition of a Veteran

House File 503 expands the definition of a veteran to include any individual who served at least 18 months and was honorably discharged after April 6, 1917. Cur-

rent law defines a veteran to include an individual who served in the Armed Forces of the United States only during various wars and conflicts. This change will expand access to peace time veterans. The bill takes effect July 1, 2010.

Mortgage Protection

House File 706 protects members of the reserve component of the United States military from losing

their homes while on active duty. Under current state law, reservists and their families are not protected from mortgage foreclosures.

In addition, the bill increases penalties from a simple misdemeanor to a serious misdemeanor for persons who foreclose mortgages on active members of Iowa National Guard and their families.

In-State Tuition

Senate File 451 increases education access for veterans and their families. The bill requires community colleges and Regent universities to charge in-state tuition for undergraduate study.

This provision applies to veterans whom are eligible for benefits

under, or have exhausted the benefits of, the federal Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008, their spouses, and their dependents. All eligible individuals must be residents of Iowa during their course of study to qualify.

Hiring Preference

Senate File 186 expands the preferential hiring treatment for veterans for government positions to include all veterans of the United States Armed Forces. Current law only applies to veterans who reside in Iowa.

Governor Signs Disaster Related Bills

Since the Legislature adjourned in April, Governor Chet Culver has signed into law a number of bills designed to improve disaster recovery and flood prevention.

Senate File 376 created an \$118.5 million Local Infrastructure Competitive Grant Program to help repair buildings and provide flood control and prevention, a \$46.5 million Targeted Disaster Rebuilding Program in the hardest hit areas, approved \$25 million for Watershed and Water Quality Grants for flood prevention projects and soil conservation practices, and created \$5 million in Disaster Damaged Housing Assistance Grants. It was signed into law on May 14.

Senate File 474 allows the Board of Regents to issue \$100 million in academic revenue bonds to repair or replace the flood-damaged buildings on the University of Iowa campus.

House File 822 creates an Iowa Flood Center at the University of Iowa to develop better flood plain mapping, improve flood monitoring and predictions, and share resources and expertise while creating a workforce knowledgeable in flood mitigation strategies.

House File 705 instructs the Building Code Commissioner to develop standards for constructing safe rooms and storm shelters in new buildings. Although safe rooms and storm shelters are not required, this will give builders standards to follow if the rooms or shelters are to be included in a project.

House File 756 directs the Water Resource Coordinating Council to develop regional watershed, land use, and floodplain management policies.

House File 759 requires cities and counties to meet the requirements of the federal flood insurance program. If a flood map is already approved, the requirements must be met by June 2011. If the community does not have a map, they must meet the requirements within two years from the time they get a map. No one is required to buy flood insurance. However, this should allow property owners to purchase federal flood insurance, which is somewhat less expensive than private flood insurance.

Senate File 377 expands the current prescription drug repository program to provide free prescription drugs to victims of natural or health disasters. Current law only allowed low-income Iowans to use the program.

Senate File 415 provides an expedited process that cities can use to acquire abandoned disaster-related property. It provides a court procedure and establishes a property rights defense account that property owners can use to reimburse their expenses if they contest the condemnation.

Property Tax Relief

The disaster recovery bill, Senate File 457, provides further relief to property owners and communities. It allows cities and counties to create Disaster Revitalization Areas and grant up to a 100%, 5- year tax exemption for the increased assessed value of property that has been revitalized. It also legalizes action taken by cities and counties to meet emergency needs last summer.

Senate File 457 creates a Disaster Recovery Housing Project Tax Credit on individual, corporate and franchise taxes for qualified disaster recovery housing projects. The credits are good for five years, beginning in calendar year 2011. The maximum amount of credits issued cannot exceed \$3 million in each of the five tax years, or \$15 million total from 2011 through 2017.

Summer Youth and Green Corps Become Law

Flanked by dozens of AmeriCorps members, the Governor has signed Senate File 482, which establishes a Summer Youth Corps and Green Corps programs. It is estimated that the Summer Youth Corps program will create 1,000 to 1,400 jobs, and the Green Corps program will create 50 jobs. Iowa is the first state in the country to create a Green Corps program.

Administered through the Commission on Volunteer Service (CVS), the summer youth corps and green corps would provide meaningful soft skill development of Iowa's young people, and allow them to work in communities on service projects.



In these tough economic times, this could be an excellent resource for our local governments. The

Green Corps program would also be established for high school and college aged young adults emphasizing energy efficiency, historic preservation and neighborhood development. The older youth would be able to do more hands on work compared to those in Youth Corp.

President Obama has signed the Generations Invigorating Volunteerism and Education (GIVE) Act that will help fund the programs. H.R. 1388 will help increase our nation's preparedness in responding to natural disasters, authorizes grants to increase the supply of volunteers and strengthen volunteer programs nationwide.

This federal investment in a new Volunteer Generation would help

fund the Youth Corps and Green Corps programs. The federal funds would be competitive grants, but through the establishment of these programs, and partnerships that the legislation requires, Iowa's application is very competitive. Partnering with other states with Youth Corps programs, such as Minnesota, has also been discussed.

Senate File 482 took effect immediately upon the Governor's signature so as soon as the federal funded grant applications are approved, work could begin late summer or early fall. The development of the rules for the programs is expected to be discussed at the next CVS board meeting. This would place the first bids for community projects in August, if the rules process goes smoothly.

Values Fund to Assist Flood Damaged Business

Acting on a request from the city of Cedar Rapids, the Economic Development Board has awarded \$435,000 from the Community Economic Betterment Account (CEBA) for flood recovery costs at Diamond V Mills. The award retains 87 jobs at Diamond V, which suffered more than \$6 million in facilities damage and production costs from the floods last June. Only \$2 million of the flood damage was covered by insurance.

Diamond V is the world's leading supplier of fermented yeast products used to optimize animal nutrition and health.

Mitchell County Company May Diversify

Absolute Energy is considering a \$2.4 million diversification at its Mitchell County ethanol plant. The Economic Development Board awarded the company \$200,000 from the Value-Added Agricultural Products & Processes Financial Assistance Program (VAAPFAP) to add new equipment and storage to extract corn oil from the ethanol process. The corn oil would be sold to a regional biodiesel facility or as animal feed.

Absolute Energy was also awarded tax credits from the High Quality Job Creation program for the plant modernization.

Ames Start-up Technology Company

WebFilings LLC, a software developer, was formed in August 2008 and opened offices in the Iowa State University Research Park. WebFilings expects to test a new product this year, followed by its release into the market. Continued development, launch and support activities are expected to create 20 jobs and retain two jobs.

The Economic Development board has awarded \$250,000 from the Entrepreneurial Ventures Assistance (EVA) program to continue WebFilings' progress in Ames.

Main Street Communities Announced

The Department of Economic Development (DED) has announced the selection of seven communities for the Main Street Iowa program. Ames, Colfax, Fort Madison, and Manning were chosen to participate in the traditional program. In addition, commercial districts in Cedar Rapids (Czech Village/New Bohemia), Davenport (Hilltop Campus Village) and Des Moines (6th Avenue Corridor) will be part of Main Street Iowa's new Urban Neighborhood District program.

The new communities bring the total number of Main Street programs in Iowa to 47. For more than 20 years, Main Street Iowa has been a model in the nation for downtown revitalization programs.

While Main Street Iowa has excelled in the traditional downtowns of designated communities, legislation was passed in 2008 that recognizes the need for commercial development and revitalization in urban neighborhoods. Urban commercial districts have unique differences, but can benefit from the same Main Street principles and practices.

The Main Street program strives to keep Iowa's downtowns strong and vibrant for business owners, workers, residents and visitors. Each of the selected communities has demonstrated strong partnerships, a high level of volunteerism, and a commitment to the revitalization of their commercial districts.

Colfax and Fort Madison will adopt design standards so historic building improvements are made to the standards of those listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Downtown Colfax boasts many buildings that could be considered historic. The "youngest" building, not including additions, was built in 1923, and there are 17 buildings that were built between 1882 and 1912. Fort Madison is planning activities so young people see the importance of being involved with downtown. Fort Madison is unique because it is the only community that left the program and then selected to come back.

Ames and the Hilltop Neighborhood of Davenport will enhance the visual appeal of their downtowns. They will provide property owners and businesses with a unified de-

sign for encouraging improvement that will call attention to their businesses. Their programs will also strive to promote tourism in downtown.

The Czech Village/New Bohemia and the Des Moines 6th Avenue Corridor present unique challenges created by language and cultural barriers they will address. One of the first goals of the Des Moines project will be to establish a business association, while Cedar Rapids will attempt to create a premier multi-modal transportation corridor for pedestrians, bikes and public transportation.

Over the years, by working together with the state, Main Street Iowa communities have realized the benefits of more than 1.6 million hours of volunteer time. They have committed to improving their city centers, a significantly increased job and business base, and millions of dollars in private investment to purchase, construct and rehabilitate downtown property.

Memorial Day Weekend Deadliest for Vehicle Accidents

The Governor's Traffic and Safety Bureau reported that there were 12 deaths as a result of vehicle accidents over the 2009 Memorial Day weekend. In 2008, there was one death, and in 2007, there were eight deaths.

Commissioner Gene Meyer, of the Department of Public Safety, stated that this high number of

deaths is very concerning to him. The Department of Public Safety reports that while Iowa has 93% seatbelt usage rate, those 7% who do not buckle up represent 150,000 drivers and 50,000 front seat passengers.

The Governor's Traffic and Safety Bureau, and the Departments of Public Safety and Trans-

portation are working hard to make sure that everyone knows there is no substitute for wearing seatbelts every time, wearing helmets if you are on a motorcycle, and not driving while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Diesel Engine Exhaust Reduction Grants Available

Projects to reduce diesel engine exhaust can apply for grant funding through a new program with the Air Quality Bureau of the Department of Natural Resources. The program is called the Reduce Iowa's Diesel Exhaust (RIDE).

Applications are being accepted through June 29, 2009. State government agencies, local governments, or private groups or businesses are eligible to apply.

Entities that organize a sub-grant program for owners of diesel engines are also eligible. Grants totaling at least \$1.49 million will be awarded.

Projects that reduce the greatest amount of diesel emissions for the money spent will carry the most weight in the application process. Additional consideration will also be given for projects in target areas for particulate pollution and air toxics,

densely populated areas, and in areas of dense diesel usage, such as rail yards or distribution centers. Projects that have monetary or in-kind contributions are not required, but are strongly encouraged.

Application guidelines and forms can be found at www.iowacleanair.com.

New Ban on Winter Manure Application

Governor Culver signed into law the bill that bans surface application of liquid manure on snow covered or frozen ground unless there is an emergency. This law replaces rules that were being proposed by the Department of Natural Resources.

Specifically, Senate File 432 allows livestock producers to surface apply all types of manure (liquid or dry) on snow covered or frozen ground. However, the surface application of liquid manure from confinement operations is banned between December 21 and April 1 on snow covered ground, and between February 1 and April

1 on frozen ground, unless there is an emergency.

An emergency only occurs if the application is needed due to unforeseen circumstances affecting the storage of the liquid manure, which includes natural disasters, unusual weather conditions, or equipment or structural failure. An emergency does not apply because of improper design or management of the manure storage, or if the manure storage structure has a capacity to store manure for less than 180 days.

The bill specifies what a producer needs to do to apply during

an emergency, including calling the Department of Natural Resources field office, including acres within their manure management plan, applying only on fields with a phosphorus index rating of two or less, and temporarily blocking a surface water drain tile intake for two weeks.

Exceptions to the liquid manure ban include small animal feeding operations (less than 500 animal units) and when the liquid manure can be injected or incorporated on the same day.

CAT Awards to Coralville and Grinnell

This month, the Vision Iowa Board awarded \$1.7 million in Community Action and Tourism (CAT) grants to a new performing arts center in Coralville and an aquatic center in Grinnell.

The Coralville Center for the Performing Arts will consist of a 518 seat theater on land purchased by City of Coralville and transferred to Southgate Development Services under an urban renewal agreement for private devel-

opment. The theater will then be sold to the City of Coralville upon completion. This award is contingent upon the completion of fundraising in 180 days.

Grinnell's Family Aquatic Center will include eight 25-meter lap lanes, a speed slide, a tube slide, a family slide, zero-depth entry with various play features, a water walk, concessions, a lazy river, a new bathhouse, shade structures and new playground equipment.

The Vision Iowa Program provides financial incentives to communities for the construction of recreational, cultural, educational or entertainment facilities that enhance the quality of life in Iowa. Currently, 311 CAT awards have been granted by the board, totaling over \$111 million.

Regenia Bailey Named Chair of Vision Iowa Board

Governor Culver has announced Regenia Bailey as the new chair of the Vision Iowa Board. Bailey has been a member of the

Board since 2006, most recently serving as Vice-Chair.

“It’s my pleasure to work with Mayor Bailey and the entire Vision Iowa Board, as we continue our efforts to improve the quality of life of our citizens,” said Governor Culver.

“These projects will put people to work, help make our communities more attractive, and provide new and exciting educational and recreational opportunities for countless Iowans.”

Gas Prices Surpass \$2/gallon Statewide

Gasoline prices have continued to climb throughout the summer and now exceed \$2 per gallon in all major Iowa markets according to the Department of Natural Resources.

The May 15 average price of 10 percent ethanol mid-grade gasoline statewide was \$2.16 per gallon.

This price is 41% lower than May 2008 but is an increase of 11% from April 2009.

Heating fuel prices have also decreased significantly since this time last year, yet rose in price since last month. Natural gas prices have decreased 66% compared to May 2008 while increasing

14% from April 2009 to May 2009. Propane prices have decreased not only from May 2008 levels, but also since April 2009. Home heating oil has decreased in price by 56% since May 2008 and prices remain slightly higher since April 2009, increasing in price 1% over the last month.