

## **TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS IN THE IA SENATE**

IA Senate Majority Leader, Mike Gronstal (D), of Council Bluffs spoke to Club members about actions in the state legislature. Gronstal noted he had been representing Council Bluffs and Carter Lake for twenty-five years in state legislature. This year with a Democratic governor in power, Gronstal said he was having a fun time working at the legislative processes to get laws on the books. Some of the major issues approved were related to stem cell research, minimum wage, and a salary boost to Iowa teachers. Gronstal explained the teacher salary bill is intended to raise the state average to the US average teacher salary level. Iowa already funds education overall at higher level than most states.

There has been much legislative discussion on renewable energy plans and according to Gronstal, Iowa is leading the world in the transition from petroleum based to ethanol based fuel. Iowa has switched from being an importer to an exporter of oil based fuels. Gronstal expects a million acres more corn grown this season in Iowa because of the need for ethanol production.

Gronstal said the legislature ends the year working on the budget which totals nearly \$6 billion. He noted that Iowa has more money in reserve than at any other time. Next year the legislature will be working more on educational issues, health care access, and business development to provide jobs. However, there are also significant needs for prison facilities and highway improvement.