

Iowa Senate



Mike Gronstall spoke at the Treynor Optimist Club on March 7. He has been leader of the Democratic caucus since 1996. At that time the Democrats became the minority and voted for a change of leadership. He won the vote 11-10.

Gronstall said his policy is to “focus on good public policy. When you cannot do that, do smart public policy.”

Gronstall said he thinks the best achievement of the legislature this session has been voting for additional resources for roads through the \$0.10 increase in gas tax. Gas taxes can only be used on roads. One-third of gas taxes go to counties. Another 20% goes to cities.

A study several years ago showed that the state had \$20B in needs. That was too high of figure, so they went back and looked at critical needs. That came in at \$4B. \$4B raised over 20 years requires \$200M additional revenue per year. Each penny raises about \$20M in revenue. To raise an additional \$200M per year they needed a \$0.10 gas tax revenue increase.

Iowa has 33M acres of cultivated farmland. The legislature tried to spend \$20M last year on water improvement activities, but the bill didn't pass.

Asked about stoplight cameras in Iowa, Gronstall said that fatalities decreased from 3800 to 700 with installation of cameras the first year. It has increased to 1300 lately. Jaws of Life extractions decreased from 45 to single digits.

Asked about school funding, Gronstall said that the Democrats support more than a 1.25% levee for schools. Republicans don't see any pressure for funding at that level. They need more pressure from the public to support an increase. There are 486,000 youth in schools in Iowa. As a side note, Gronstall said that Iowa has a great reputation for graduating good teachers.