

THE ROADRUNNER

FEBRUARY 2015

REPORT



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STATE
SPEECH

EDITOR'S DESK



Proactive Improvement as a Team

Allyson Watson, Content Editor
Friday, February 20, 2015

With all of the fantastic focus and effort that our splendid group of writers and pho-

tographers put into the magazine, I think that we sometimes forget to step back and see this as it really is: an English class. In Journalism, our two biggest goals are to 1) uncover and share the truth, and 2) improve our writing skills, and write in a way that interests our very important audience. you.

In order to uncover the truth, a journalist must be proactive. Journalism gives us an opportunity to do this. Recently, we have taken the immense responsibility of doing our part to make a difference in education in our community, and in the state of Iowa. At this time, Iowa is ranked #36 for our quality of education. That in itself is alarming. Additionally, the state wants to give schools a mere 1.25% allowable growth for the next year. With the rate of inflation at approximately 3% it wouldn't be an increase at all, but instead a loss of 1.75%. With that loss would come great change. Just last issue we displayed the astounding achievements of all of Interstate 35's marvellous academic extracurriculars. If we have an essential 1.75% cut on our budget, many of those programs will be reduced, or worse, cut altogether. Acknowledging this looming horror, the journalism team has started a virtual petition. We have taken to twitter, facebook, and other social media to spread awareness about this, in hopes that it may sweep the state and influence our government to give us up to 4% allowable growth. You can follow us on twitter at @TheI35RR and you can follow our hashtags for the project which are #FOURtunatefutures and #pupilsnotpolitics. Help us raise awareness so we can keep expanding and improving our education, and the education of others as well! You can also read more about this

project in our feature article.

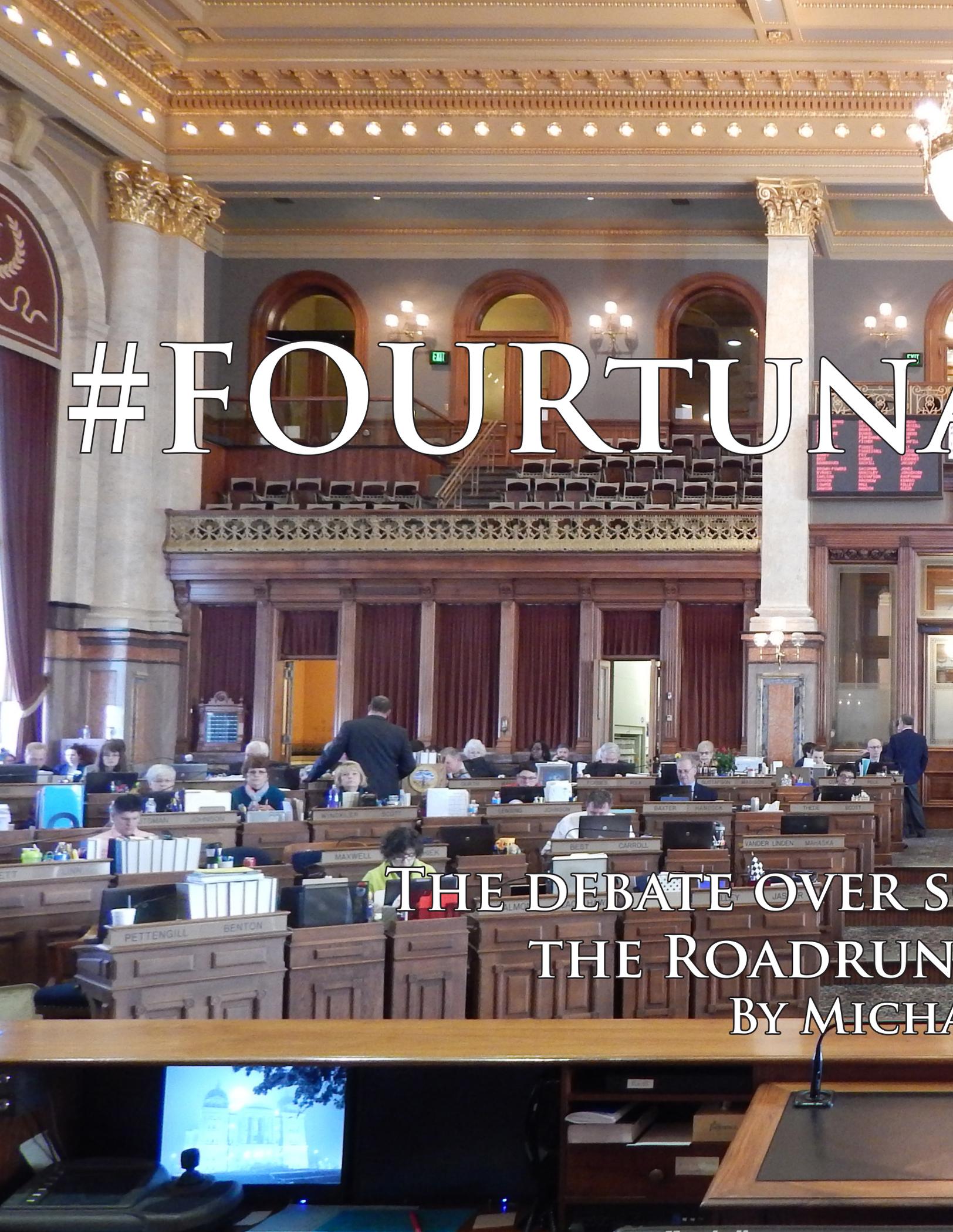
On a more regular, daily not, our publication requires that we go out and interact with people. We have to ask the questions that no one else is asking, and then sift through all the information we gather to find the ever-evasive truths. However, this isn't the most challenging part. After we get our hands on the truth, we must share it in a way that interests and directly relates to our readers. This is where we catch sight of our second goal.

As content editor, I want our best work to be published, and as any successful individual knows, the best can forever be improved. As a leader in journalism, my goal is to help others grow. I strive to help the already astonishingly strong team become even stronger writers, and to make myself stronger by also learning from them. After I read articles and correct any grammatical errors, I like to meet with each writer individually and talk about the strengths and weaknesses in their writing. We then confer about how and what to improve. It can be hard to admit, but even the best fall down sometimes. Being a journalist isn't easy. However, we have an wonderfully supportive group of extraordinary individuals that all bring their own strengths to the team, and help each other improve. In journalism, we aren't just a team; we are a family.

I would like to thank each and every one of the marvelous writers and photographers for their phenomenal effort and courage in taking on this class. I would also like to thank them for their continual cooperation and endless patience and desire to better themselves. I want to give a special thank you to all of the other editors, Riley Wearmouth, Amber Crow, Josh Hughes, Blake Kozak, and Breanna De Angelis for stepping up into the incredible roles that they continue to fulfill and use to help others. Finally, I would like to thank Ms. Schwenk, for her infinite support, and for always pushing us to help each other improve. Without her unfailing wisdom, none of this would be possible. Thank you.

#FOURTURN

THE DEBATE OVER S
THE ROADRUN
BY MICHA



A grand, ornate legislative chamber with people seated at desks and a balcony of empty seats. The room features high ceilings with decorative moldings, large columns, and arched windows. People are seated at long wooden desks in the foreground, some using laptops. A balcony with rows of empty seats is visible in the background. The overall atmosphere is formal and professional.

STATE FUTURES

SCHOOL FUNDING &
PARENT RESPONSE
MICHAEL SNELL

#FOURtunateFutures

By Michael Snell
Wednesday, February 18, 2015

TRURO - Dr. Kevin Fiene is an approachable man. As superintendent of Interstate 35 High School CSD, he has many tasks and jobs, but first and foremost for him is, and always has been, the kids. If any student ever has a problem or a question, he is always open and honest in person and in email. This turned very true when he discovered something troubling and shocking which applied to the school. On January 13th, 2015, Gov. Terry Branstad released the proposed 2016-2017 budget for the State of Iowa. The summary of the budget is available in an easy to read 210 page booklet which describes the changes for education as "Accelerating Transformational Education Reform."(1) For numbers there is the not-so-easy to read 1,147 page book.(2) There one can look between the lines a little closer.

There is a section on page 288 which lists Appropriations from

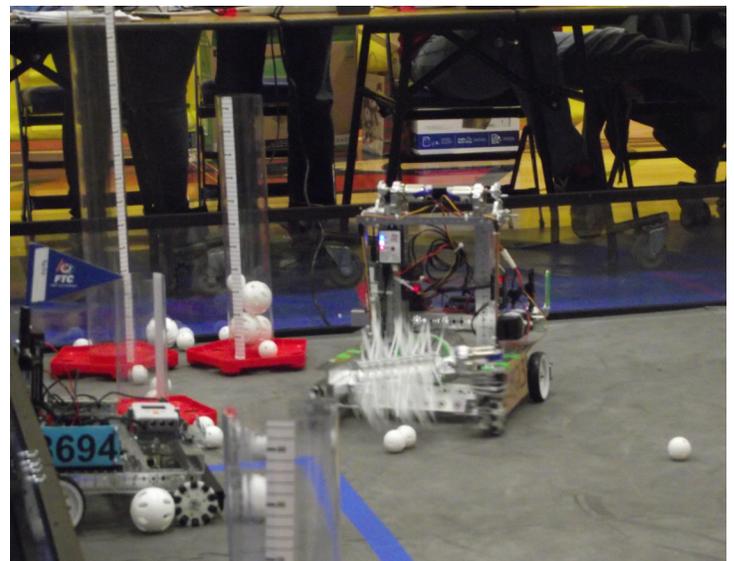
the General Fund. Here there are surprising sections, like the Governor's Education Reform fund, which gave \$6,840,000 to schools this year, then shows the Governor's Recommended spending in the Governor's Education Reform section for the next two years, as \$0. A complete cut from the promise of more educational reform. But this is only one of a few strange findings in the budget. There isn't a penny more offered than \$5,428,877 for preschool, which is the same as this year. Why is this a problem? Inflation.

Inflation deals with the rising costs of everything. National inflation doesn't take into account gas and groceries (because their inflation is too extreme), but considers everything else from the costs of books, transportation, and teacher wages for their rising cost of living for example.

That said, the fact that preschool funding hasn't changed means that they are receiving funds at 0% AG (allowable growth), while schools usually need to anticipate a 3-3.5% increase. So when Dr. Fiene saw that the proposed budget allowed

for only 1.25% AG, he wasn't all too happy, which is unlike his usual self.

"After the shock, I was angry," said Dr. Fiene. "We (schools across Iowa) are working our butts off with whatever resources we have, then the Governor offers a 1.25% increase which will not even pay anticipated increased costs for the essentials." Most of a budget will cover the bare essentials in a school, and by most, I mean 80% is used to cover the salaries of faculty, and most of the rest is used for heat in the winter, air conditioning in the library and computer lab, electricity for all of the lights and hundreds of laptops in their carts, water, paper, printer ink, maintenance on everything, and the allotted budget for classes and activities. There is state money behind football, basketball, volleyball, track, wrestling, band, choir, speech, among the dozens of other extracurricular activities our great school has to offer. We have a privilege at our small school to be involved in any number of activities as we please if grades are kept up, but the plausibility exists that these activities may be stripped of



some money if it gets too tight.

“I don’t want to start a panic on cutting athletics, arts, etc. ... but the reality is without adequate funding, by law we must balance our budget so something would have to go,” continued Dr. Fiene. He explained to me that it was all simple economics; revenue needs to increase, spending needs to decrease, or a combination of both. The fact that revenue would hardly increase would push for the second option; spending decrease. The smart people who deal with our budget would do an incredibly efficient job at it by getting rid of numerous unnecessary costs to help out, but there could come a breaking point. If no more small cuts could be made, “virtually any program not required by the Department of Education or legislatively mandated will have to be on the table for discussion.”

The proposed 1.25% increase in AG was taken up by the Iowa House. The bill, which would give schools an allowable growth number for the 2015-2016 (FY’16) was pushed through committee in the Republican dominated House

of Representatives. Once it came to the floor, however, it faced a much harder challenge. Representative Patti Ruff, the lead Democrat on the House Education Committee, proposed an amendment to the 1.25% increase that would allocate 6%, not the lower figure. The amendment was debated for nearly four hours, going long into the night. Representatives from across the state gave moving testimony as to what an increase of 1.25% would mean. Representative Ako Abdul Samad from Des Moines, spoke about education as the great equalizer, and about the struggles that students would face with, what is effectively, a school budget cut.

The amendment giving schools 6% allowable growth failed on a strictly party line vote: 56 Republicans voting ‘No’, and 43 Democrats voting ‘Yes’, with one non-voting member. The final version of the bill, with 1.25% increase language passed in the same division- all Republicans supporting the measure, and all Democrats opposing. What’s worse is that Iowa law mandates that the Legislature pass allowable growth numbers for the following fiscal year- mean-

ing that in 2015 the Iowa General Assembly should be passing school budgets for FY’17, starting July 1, 2016, not FY’16. The deadline to pass FY’17 AG was in the beginning of February.

The Iowa State Education Association, School Administrators of Iowa, Iowa Association of School Boards, Urban Education Network, and Rural School Advocates of Iowa all suggested a 6% increase in AG. The slight surplus would do wonders for the school. Other than being more worry-free for the upcoming fiscal year, educators and administrators could advocate for some updates to the quickly dating and further obsoleting laptop carts the I-35 student body has made good use from since they’ve been put in the classroom.

But a 6% increase is a little too optimistic (other areas in the state need money too). So the Democratic State Senate has pushed for a 4% increase.

A 4% increase is the goal.

Four percent would keep the school’s head above water, and



Comic courtesy of Skylar Brown and Brody Curtis



would provide for a better fiscal year ahead. A movement has begun in our journalism class at Interstate 35. We wish to help push for the 4%, because if we don't advocate for it, then we are looking at a 1.25% increase instead. This would be bad for everyone involved.

The article is entitled #FOURtunatefutures, because high school students need to advocate that our whole high school careers depend entirely on what the school can provide, and what the State pro-

vides the school. Because we the students of I-35 not only need, but deserve more than 1.25%. Four percent can help to make our futures more fortunate. And so this author advocates that every student take time to raise awareness; send a Tweet with the hashtags #FOURtunatefutures, or #pupilsnotpolitics, because we are more important than the agenda of politicians. As Fiene mentions as well, "I'm still ticked and doing everything I can to inform legislators of the real world of schools, not the images

conjured up by some politicians. I'm sick and tired of politicians playing political football with education, with our kids – it is morally and ethically wrong."

It's not too late to get involved- use the Iowa Legislature Website (legis.iowa.gov) to find your legislators and tell them your thoughts on this issue.

Josh Hughes contributed to this report.