

OPINION

GUEST COMMENTARY

Bills and constituents



DAVID ROWLEY

IOWA SENATE DISTRICT 5

On Monday I started my day receiving a draft of a bill I recently filed for a constituent and approving another bill to be drafted. One bill is a companion to Rep. Megan Jones' bill in the House regarding the use of fake money or movie prop dollars. The other bill deals with state sales and use tax.

Throughout the week we focused on moving bills through the Legislature and meeting with constituents here at the Capitol. This week the House passed the SSA (Student Supplemental Aid) bill, SF 192, to provide an additional \$107 million for our local schools. Education is the largest part of our state budget and our first priority for us in the Legislature. We are required by law to pass the SSA budget within 30 days of session. Gov. Kim Reynolds signed the bill into law on Wednesday, which was fitting as STEM students from all over Iowa were in the Capitol sharing their priorities. GTR and Okoboji schools were there and I enjoyed the meet and greet we had!

I also met with a large group of landowners who are reforming the rules used for eminent domain. Joined by Sens. Dennis Guth, Jeff Taylor and Kevin Alons, we heard from these good people about their concerns and their support for SF 101, which repeals the use of eminent domain for hazardous liquid pipelines. We discussed the goals for moving the bill and heard from every voice in the room. I want to thank all those folks for making the trip down and their comments to support the bill as well.

HF 161 relating to the setting of a liability limit for malpractice lawsuits passed this week. The cost and accessibility of health care routinely ranks among the top issues in Iowa especially in rural Iowa. It is a key component for future economic growth as well as. Massive verdicts have affected the recruiting of health care workers and providers. It has put tremendous pressure on local hospitals and other health care providers. House File 161 sets the maximum liability limit for "non-economic" damages at \$1 million for doctors and \$2 million for hospitals. Limits on "non-economic" are in place in 33 other states with most well under a \$1 million cap. Rural health care facilities are ill-equipped to handle sizable judgements like the recent \$97 million verdict in Iowa City. Again, this only applies to "non-economic" damages leaving punitive and economic redress available with no limits. I am hopeful our hospitals can be successful as a result of passing this bill to recruit good people and provide rural Iowans the health care we need.

After a long week I look forward to returning home to attend different forum events with our fellow legislators. This week I will be in Emmetsburg. I am eager to learn about your concerns and meet new faces. I receive quite a few messages from my district. I appreciate all messages regardless if we agree or disagree, because without doing this, I would not know what you are thinking. So always feel free to contact me with your questions or concerns, and if you find yourself at the Capitol, let me know. I would love to schedule a meeting with you.

Thank you for this opportunity to serve.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Iowa House legislation is a positive move for Iowa's school boards to prove transparency

"When we avoid difficult conversations, we trade short term discomfort for long term dysfunction." — Peter Bromberg

The Spencer area voters received a boost of encouragement by Iowa House Rep. Megan Jones of Clay County on Feb. 6 when House File 196 was introduced, championing a public who wish to secure audience with their locally elected school board officials during regular or special meetings.

The bill would require Iowa's school boards of directors to allow 30 minutes for public comment during each regular and/or special meeting, with time limits set for each speaker during the timeframe. At present, boards have flexibility on how to offer open forum time to the public.

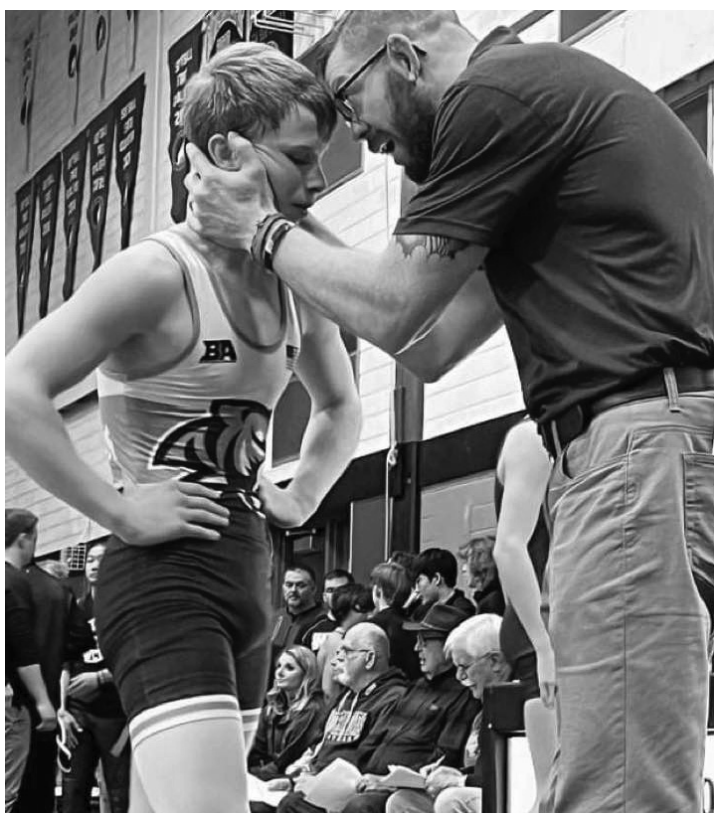
There's good cause for local voters to pay close attention to this bill as it progresses through the state legislature. While the provision of unimpeded public forum opportunities is commonplace at some of Iowa's school board meetings, it's not been so in Spencer.

A group of concerned citizens has grown increasingly troubled by the push back recently received from Spencer's School Board members after seeking individual audience with them. We also sought to address the board as a unified front during the regular board meeting on Dec. 13, 2022. We were denied public forum, proving troublesome.

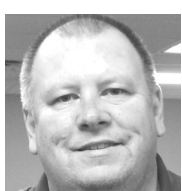
At the time, the citizens wished to encourage the board to act concerning a grievous issue involving two middle school employees whose reckless actions made public subjected our area's children to questionable information impertinent to the learning environment. When the citizens sought face-time with the board, we were advised to jump through several hoops to earn a slot on the agenda at the regular meeting. After completing that task, the board insisted we had not followed proper chain of command and could not be on the agenda. The group was also denied public forum by board president Bob Whittenburg that evening. We were again referred to Spencer's heavy-handed, self-imposed policy, which grants the board control over public forum opportunities during school board meetings. Find the board's

ONE MAN'S PERSPECTIVE

What a difference a year makes



What a difference a year makes. In 2022 (left), the agony of defeat; and in 2023 (right), two dreams realized. (Photos submitted)



RANDY M. CAUTHRON

SPENCER REPORTER MANAGING EDITOR

Last year at this time, my column centered around the disappointment my son felt after falling just short of the opportunity to represent his school and join his teammates on the mat in the Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines for the Iowa State Wrestling Tournament. For a high school wrestler in the Hawkeye State, this is the ultimate goal. For many wrestling fans, the Iowa high school event is considered the pinnacle of prep competition.

So you can imagine the genuine disappointment and heartbreak with coming so close but falling just short. That was what my youngest son, Gabe, found himself dealing with at the all-too-early conclusion of his junior year in 2022.

I used the photo of his walking off the mat into the embrace of his coach to help tell the story. The coach told my wife and I following the completion of the district tournament Saturday, he kept that article to remind himself daily.

I'm happy to report in 2023, this column has a happier theme for Gabe — now a senior — and seven of his teammates as they all punched their tickets for the celebration of high school wrestling in the state capital which begins Wednesday.

Gabe picked up his guaranteed ticket to the Iowa High School Athletic Association with a 12-2 victory in the consolation championship against an opponent who narrowly defeated him earlier this season at a tournament in Ames. The win afforded my son two goals, the berth at state, as well as his 100th win, a benchmark in the Spencer Tiger wrestling program. To accomplish both goals in the same moment is not only a perfect conclusion to a career as a four-year varsity starter but is the reward for a year of dedication to erase a missed opportunity a year prior.

Am I bragging about my son? Yes, I guess I am. But I'm also using his example to serve his teammates — both those who will join him on the big stage in Des Moines beginning tomorrow — and those who experienced the disappointment he endured in 2022. That what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. Not an original thought, but most appropriate at this time. Gabe used the experience to fuel his desire. He dedicated himself to making it to Des Moines this year. That meant hours in the weight room. It meant showing up for offseason open mat time, attending summer camp, getting in the wrestling room on Sunday nights and completing two-plus hours of football practice then showing up in the room to roll around with his teammates for an hour or so throughout the fall. He poured out his blood and sweat — literally — for the sport, and the commitment paid off.

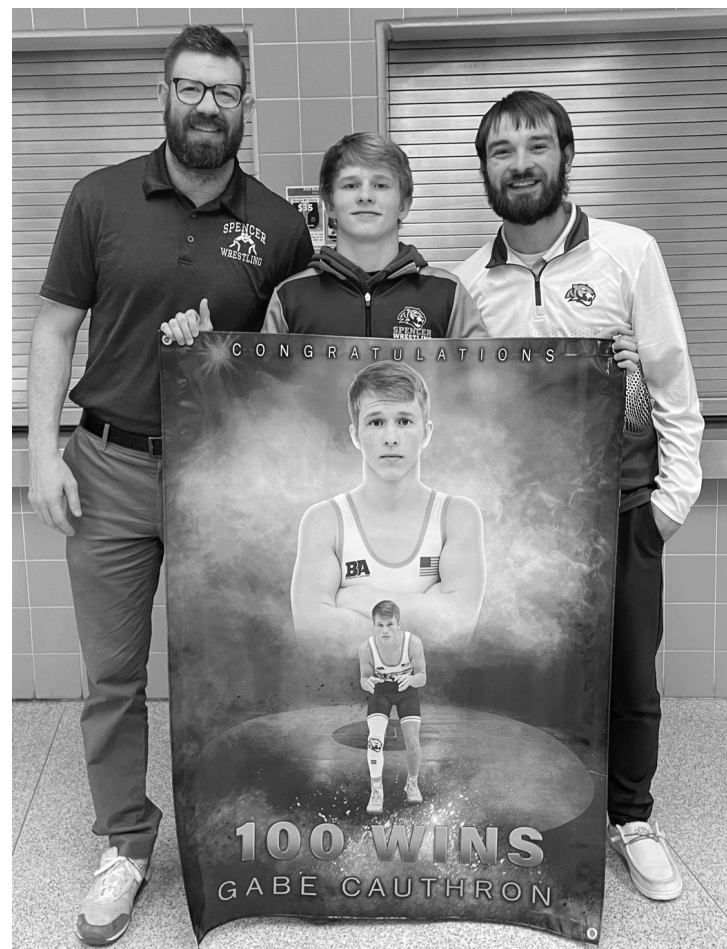
There are many other equally dedicated wrestlers who made the same sacrifices for whom the work didn't have the same payoff this season. Like Gabe last year, they missed the target. For underclass wrestlers, next year is a new year. Go after

LETTER TO THE EDITOR CONTINUED

meeting policy on the district's website. The board's policy is wielded recklessly to silence the public — when necessary.

When reviewing the board's policy, we encourage readers to take note of line item #3, which requires public members to inform the superintendent of their topic of discussion at least three days prior to the meeting — FOR A PUBLIC FORUM. Line item No. 5 notes the board president is granted authority to decide who is allowed to speak during public forum. You can see how this complicates things for a group like ours who sought to address a sensitive issue that the board chose to avoid. The board also insisted our grievance was a personnel issue and couldn't be discussed during public forum, although policy line item #6 proves that logic questionable as well. And while the board continued to stonewall the citizens from securing audience, the taboo topic was widely discussed at dinner tables and youth group meetings that week. Many parents pressed shock that the issue remained unaddressed by our board, as well.

This isn't the first time Spencer's board policy has been mishandled and misused to silence public speech, preventing the sharing of multiple viewpoints necessary to garner important facts and perspectives from the public. The deflecting exists



it again. For those like Gabe, who are seniors this year, understand that sometimes, despite your best efforts, things don't always go as planned. But you always grow. The process which creates a diamond involves a lot of squeezing. Take your experiences in the wrestling room and on the mat and make something great come from it. Learn from your losses and take that disappointment and turn it into fuel for your future. Great things await you and hopefully you'll be able to look back at the time spent in the wrestling arena, and all that went into it, as tools that helped build and form the person you are.

As for me and my wife, as parents, we have watched five boys wrestle for coaches Dave Schaefer and Adam Gress. For 17 years Cauthron boys have been in the Spencer wrestling room dating back to their time in elementary school. Gabe has literally been at Spencer wrestling events since his birth. Growing into an 18-year-old in the Spencer field house as a sleeping infant, a wide-eyed youth with dreams of being a basketball star despite a height which didn't support it, a two-time AAU state qualifier, a 95-pound freshman and sophomore who stepped up to take on the Tigers' open 113-pound spot, a two-time Lakes Conference champion, a multitime tournament champion, a member of multiple conference Lakes dual champions, the newest addition to the elite Spencer Century Club and the 20th seed in the Class 3A IHSAA Wrestling Tournament.

All the miles traveled and hotel stays, shared times with all the wrestling families and fans in the stands developing a bad case of "bleacher butt," the tears and joys with wins and losses — it was all precious and very much worth it. For Leah and I, an era is coming to an end. I am so thankful for those who have coached our children over the years and supported them from the stands with words of encouragement and affirmation. I am thankful for their teammates who walked the path beside them enduring the pressure, pain, sacrifice, joy and disappointment. And I am thankful Leah and I got to experience it all.

I'm sure parents with kids in every sport feel this way but I can only write from my experience.

My message to other wrestling parents is simple. Enjoy every moment. The good and the bad. Be an encourager and their biggest cheerleader. Thank God every day you have a child blessed with gifts which allow them to do something that some children only wish they could do. And appreciate the journey. It goes by way too fast.

Whether Gabe will wrestle in the future is entirely up to him. He has been contacted by a couple of Iowa colleges to possibly continue. That will be decided down the road. For now, we will relish the trip to "The Well" this week to see a goal reached come to fulfillment.

Be well. Stay healthy. God bless.
GO TIGERS.
And as always, what say you?

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ANNIVERSARIES — Forms must be received 30 days prior to or no later than 30 days after the event.

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